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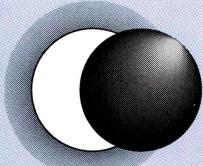
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BABYLON 5: The Second Coming

What a difference a season makes. In its second season, *Babylon 5* has proved that it's a science fiction show worthy of serious attention. That doesn't mean it's always groundbreaking, but it does mean that the show has displayed great ambition and scope in its storytelling.

The show that *Babylon 5* is most often compared to is *Deep Space Nine*, and despite the hue and cry of the show's respective creators, this is not an unfair comparison. After all, the mainstream media is quick to pit the merits of *E.R.* against those of *Chicago Hope*, or *N.Y.P.D. Blue* vs. *Law & Order* or *Homicide*. So I don't find anything particularly offensive about comparing two shows set on a space station.

In fact, it's instructive to compare the strengths and weaknesses of the respective shows. For example, while *Deep Space Nine* has gone from nearly unwatchable in its third season to a serious contender for the crown of sci-fi's best show in its fourth, its mythology episodes pale in comparison to those of *Babylon 5*, which has made its mythology the very foundation of the show. Whether it be *The Coming of Shadows* or *Fall of Night*, *BS5* works best when its brush strokes take place on a broad canvas. It stumbles more often than not when it's telling smaller, intimate stand-alone stories that all too often rely on characters from people's pasts or some overused sci-fi chestnuts (i.e., a CGI creature, a mysterious stranger, etc.).

Conversely, *Deep Space Nine* botches its mythology every time out. They've yet to establish the Dominion as a credible threat, and two of the series' biggest mythology episodes (*Improbable Cause* and *The Die Is Cast*, in which the Cardassians and Romulans team-up to conquer the Dominion) were duds. Even worse was *DS9*'s failed attempt to reinvent the *Trek*

mythos by pitting the Federation against the Klingons in *The Way of the Warrior*, a two-hour talkfest, whose implications were ignored as soon as it was over. Whereas *BS5* deals with the consequences of one's action, the idea that *DS9* could be littered with Federation and Klingon corpses by the end of *The Way of the Warrior* — and simply dropped as a plot device — is evidence of the simplicity and lack of planning that is symptomatic of *Trek*. Rather, *Deep Space Nine* is at its very best when it deals with smaller, character-based stories — unlike *BS5*. Such episodes as *The Visitor* (in which an older Jake Sisko reflects on his life) are not only great *Deep Space*, but among the best *Trek* stories ever. Off-concept shows like *Our Man Bashir* prove that by breaking out of conventional *Trek* parameters and letting loose, the writers can be at their most fresh and engaging. Conversely, *Babylon 5* is like an intergalactic soap opera (and I mean that in a good way), with its political machinations and World War II allegory proving continually fascinating. *Deep Space* however, has no linear throughline that is particularly compelling, just the week-to-week stories 26 times a year, which rarely, if ever, change the status quo of the *Trek* universe or the characters that inhabit it (I still can't decide if *DS9*'s *Homefront* is more of a *TNG* *Conspiracy* rip-off or *Trek*'s attempt to do a *BS5* episode).

BS5's creator J. Michael Straczynski has fashioned a unique and intriguing universe. Like Gene Roddenberry, he has shown a keen ability to create a science fiction milieu

that is intensely addictive. And like Gene Roddenberry, he has shown that it is unwise to try and sustain an auteurist vision on a weekly television schedule. I'd like to think it's more a question of budget than desire that Straczynski is writing every episode of *BS5* this season, but I consider this a mistake. A multiplicity of perspectives is helpful. It's folly to believe that Straczynski is the only person capable of writing the show, especially since some of the best episodes (like David Gerrold's *The Believers*) have been written by others. I believe that creativity can best be realized in an environment that is conducive to diverse perspectives. Straczynski is a man with a vision, but he's not David E. Kelley, and to shoulder the burden of scripting an entire season of episodes, in my opinion, is a major misstep.

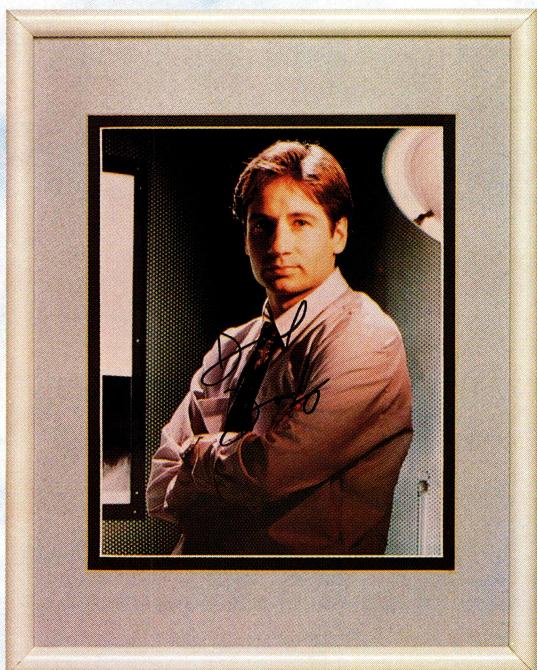
Likewise, *Deep Space Nine* has shown its most dramatic improvement in its fourth year, a season marked by many more story credits from freelance writers than staff-born shows. There comes a time in the life of any science fiction show when it takes on a life bigger than that envisioned by the creator and becomes part of something larger. The examples are nearly endless, from *Space: Above & Beyond*, in which many of the best episodes haven't come from the word processors of creators Morgan & Wong, to Chris Carter's *X-Files*, where many of the best episodes *did* come from Morgan and Wong rather than Carter, the creator. Sometimes the creator is too close to the creation to see the full potential of the premise that he/she has devised. This is not to detract from the enormous achievement of the sci-fi creators who have crafted immensely rewarding entertainment, but rather to point out that in a collaborative medium such as television, a good captain is only as good as the crew with whom he/she shares the bridge of his ship. It is only through eliciting input and ideas from other talented people and being open to change and new insights that these show's creators will be able to take their series to new heights of adventure and evolve to something greater than their own narrower vision. It is through this collective process that great science fiction television is born.

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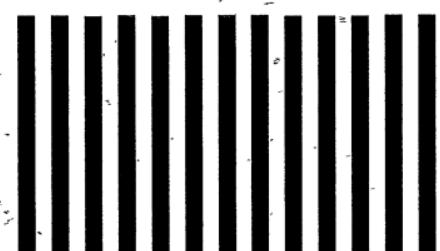
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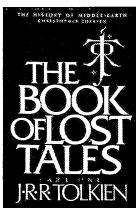
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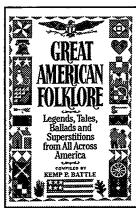
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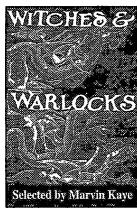
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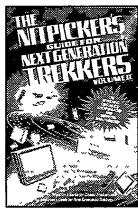
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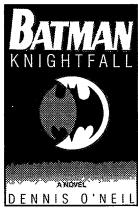
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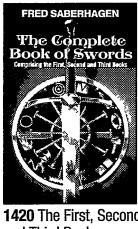
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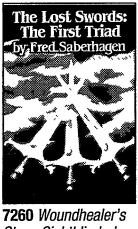
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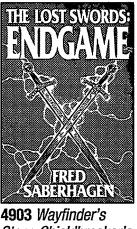
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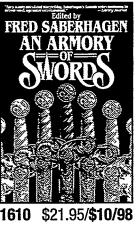
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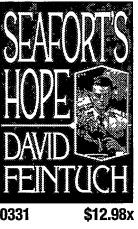
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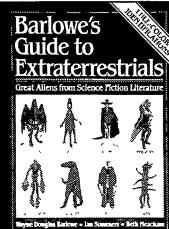
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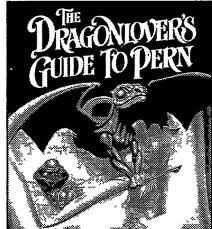
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SFU 3/96



This issue's BIG BANG is of an exploding White House from the upcoming Fox alien invasion movie, *INDEPENDENCE DAY*.

BIG BANG

NEWS FROM ACROSS THE SCI-FI UNIVERSE

WHAT'S S

The answers to all your questions about the making of the newest STAR TREK film

First, let's get one thing straight: Don't call it *Star Trek VIII*, or you're bound to get some people at Paramount mighty riled up. In fact, the latest *Star Trek* film is provisionally entitled *Star Trek: Resurrection*. Despite the mysterious title, *Resurrection* has nothing to do with bringing Captain Kirk back to life, nor is it a knowing self-reflexive reflection on the state of the franchise today. So, when the film debuts in theatres across the country this November, what can you expect? SFU called on our sources in high (and low) places for the scoop.

1) WILL IT FEATURE ANY OF THE ORIGINAL CAST? Despite the fact that *Star Trek* is currently celebrating its 30th anniversary, the current plan is *not* to feature any original cast members—although this could change. Paramount is reportedly concerned that despite celebrating the anniversary of the original show, there isn't any new original product. This could lead to a cameo or cameos from original cast members being forced on the producers of the new film by the studio—but don't hold your breath.

2) WILL THERE EVER BE ANOTHER FILM WITH THE ORIGINAL CAST? Unfortunately, this looks extremely unlikely. After *Star Trek VI*, DeForest Kelley suggested to director Nick Meyer an idea for an intergalactic version of the '60s Lee Marvin film *The Professionals*, in which Uhura would be kidnapped by an intergalactic overlord forcing Kirk to reunite the now-retired crew to assault his fortress and free Uhura. The idea went nowhere. Subsequently, fans have tossed around the idea of a UPN miniseries (perhaps an adaptation of Shatner's *Ashes of Eden*), but UPN execs labor under the idea that Shatner and Nimoy's star salaries would make such a project untenable. Nobody, however, has approached Shatner and Nimoy about whether they would work for less than their usual astronomical fees for a TV project (particularly one based on a book by Shatner and directed by Nimoy). Hmm, maybe someone should get their agents on the phone...

3) WHEN DOES FILMING ON THE NEW MOVIE BEGIN? The new film will begin shooting in late March or early April with the entire *Next Generation* cast onboard, including Patrick Stewart, who is getting paid a whopping \$5 million to reprise his role as Captain Picard (and no doubt will be receiving a much larger trailer than his cohorts). Michael Dorn will be reunited with the *Next Gen* crew while on summer hiatus from *Deep Space Nine*.

4) WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT? The film deals with the return of the Borg and, pending rewrites, begins with a huge space battle in which the Borg attack earth. The film has been described by one *Trek* insider as "*The Best of Both Worlds* meets *Yesterday's Enterprise*."

In the film, Starfleet recruits Picard as their Borg expert to find a way to combat the unstoppable Borg foe. Picard and an Away Team get sent back in time with the Borg, affecting the future while the 24th century is dramatically affected by changes to the past. Among those said to have a much bigger role in the new film is Riker, who many believe is being groomed to succeed Picard if Stewart proves uninterested

THE DEAL WITH TAR TREK VIII?



BACK IN BORGNESS: No, it's not a still from *STAR TREK: RESURRECTION*, but rather an incredible simulation. It's actually from *Descent*, the TNG episode which turned the Borg into cult-like bores. Expect a return to old form (read: baddies) in the new film which Brannon Braga promises will feature "Giger-esque" Borg "with sexuality."

or too expensive to reup for duty in the next film. Needless to say, Paramount is positively apoplectic about the thought of Stewart getting the role of Mr. Freeze in *Batman IV*, in which case Stewart would likely hand in his walking papers for future *Trek* installments. It doesn't hurt either that Jonathan Frakes is considered by the studio to be the easiest and most agreeable cast member of the *Next Gen* gang to deal with.

5) WHAT ABOUT STAR TREK IX? Contrary to those who think *Generations* (you know, the one with the Nexus, Kirk dying and Picard crying) was a monster hit, it is important to note that the film's domestic gross was less than \$75 million (the same amount made by *Star Trek III*—ten years earlier). As a result, Paramount is still wary of committing big bucks to the *Next Generation* feature series and is taking a wait-and-see approach with the new film. With above-the-line costs (covering cast, producer and director) of almost \$10 million, the writers' ambitious action script may need to be pared down to a more manageable cost, meaning a lot of the on-location action and space special effects will need to be trimmed or cut out

entirely. (This is par for the course with *Star Trek*, which has always been considered bargain basement science fiction by Paramount and has had to endure dramatic budget trimming before going into production with almost every entry in the series.) Unless the latest *Star Trek* outperforms *Generations* at the box-office, *Next Generation* may not live long and prosper on the big screen.

6) WHAT ABOUT THE ENTERPRISE-E? As of now, you'll have to wait till the very end of *Resurrection* to see the new Enterprise unmoored in spacedock since most of the action deals with the familiar crew sans their beloved spaceship (a la *Star Trek IV*). Rick Sternbach's designs for the new starship have recently been approved by *Trek* series major domo Rick Berman and described as "the Voyager meets the Excelsior." However, while Picard may not have a new ship to captain, he'll have his hands full, confronting two (count 'em two) dastardly new villains in the film and a new love interest (wonder if that was in that new \$5 million contract?).

—Mark A. Altman

rene russo

While Rene Russo, star of *Outbreak* and *Freejack* certainly has had to learn a thing

or two about screaming, she put her pipes to the test, playing Scream Queen Karen Flores in last fall's surprise comedy hit *Get Shorty*.

"I ended up screaming but they usually made sure we did it at the end of the day," says the former model turned actress. While there was a plethora of Scream Queens from Jamie Lee Curtis to Linnea Quigley to draw inspiration from, Russo chose instead to loosely base the character on herself.

"I didn't do any research on B-movie stars because I felt I wanted to play Karen against type a little bit," she admits. "I know that as a model, I used my body for years to make money."

I really got to a point where I couldn't do it another minute for a million reasons. I was getting too old—because if you're 28 you're too old in the modeling business—and psychologically I couldn't do it anymore."

Adds Russo, "I think Karen got to the point where she couldn't crawl out of another grave. So I based it on who I am because I understand that it's a double-edged sword. The money's good, but after a while it gets real tedious and boring."

Though Russo certainly could have found a second career in grade-Z horror movies if she wanted to, the A-list actress admits that this career happened all by accident.

"I wasn't desperate to get into acting," she observes. "I may have gone in that direction if I really wanted to act, but I started acting strictly because I didn't have anything else to do and there was another door wide open for me after modeling."

—A.C. Ferrante



HARLAN

ON THE EDGE OF FOREVER

Ellison sets the record straight on the creation of Star Trek's most famous episode

"I'm not particularly concerned about whether I am well-loved," says Harlan Ellison, renowned author and essayist, speaking about the reaction to his most recent book release, *The City on the Edge of Forever*, a full account of the making of the classic *Star Trek* episode he wrote for the show.

In it, Ellison denounces Gene Roddenberry, claiming that for years Roddenberry stood in front of audiences and said that he personally saved *City* from the completely unshootable teleplay which Ellison had written. Roddenberry argued that Ellison's script was unshootable because of its potential cost and its inclusion of such inappropriate Trekian behavior as Scotty's dealing of drugs.

Now, as righteously indignant as ever, Harlan Ellison finally tells his side of the story. Why now? Because after three decades of listening to the lies and innuendo smeared across the convention circuit, printed in magazines and spoken on television, Ellison has had enough and has finally spewed forth a tome that purports to reveal the "truth" behind the most famous *Star Trek* script of all time.

"I tried to keep quiet about this," Ellison explains, saying that he put off the writing of this book for many years. "I'm not a terribly reticent guy, but if Gene Roddenberry hadn't gone around lying about me for thirty years I'd have probably kept my mouth shut. When people said, 'What do you think about *Star Trek*?,' I'd have said 'It's fine.' When they said, 'What do you think about your show?,' I'd have said 'I don't like it. I prefer my script.' Now that's a fairly even-handed statement. It would never have gotten beyond that, but they began trying to deconstruct the reality of my part in this and take credit for it, saying everybody else was okay and I was a bum. I have a real low bullshit threshold and I get angry and I fight back."

And fight back he does. Ellison isn't just raging, though the anger seeps through every sentence of his 20,000-word introduction. Anticipating the inevitable backlash of devoted Trekkies unwilling to hear ill about the Great Bird of the Galaxy, he is careful to document each of his claims with news articles, pieces of correspondence and statements from others who were there at the time. *City on the Edge of Forever* takes the reader through each of the changes in the original script leading up to the aired version.

In turning over the stones, he reveals the surprising identity of who actually rewrote the final draft, a secret that even Ellison didn't know until he sat down to compile this work. The book closes with a series of new essays commissioned especially for this text from the likes of such *Trek* noteworthies as Leonard Nimoy, Peter David, DeForest Kelly, Walter Koenig, Dorothy Fontana, Melinda Snodgrass, George Takei and David Gerrold.

Anger aside, a note of truthful pathos sounds in Ellison's indictment. "When it came down to the short strokes of fulfilling his promises and of honoring them when times were tough, Gene demonstrated that he did not have the ethical fiber that he tried to tell people was his very vision of the perfectibility of the human race," says Ellison. "*Star Trek* has certainly had a profound effect on people. It is a huge icon. It taps into some well of popular mythology and so it is in and of itself a thing, a pop icon, and Gene is a very large part of that. What I think that I object to is not that Gene gets strokes for it, but that in getting the strokes for it, he denies strokes for everyone else and that's unfair because it was all the other people who did it."

And how does Ellison feel about arousing the ire of Roddenberry's staunchest supporters who will find his account an affront bordering on sacrilege?

Says Ellison, "I do not seek the approbation of monkeys."

-Lou Anders

City on the Edge of Forever is available from Borderlands Press, Box 146, Brooklandville, MD 21022 or call 1-800-528-3310 as a special limited edition for \$75. A trade edition has been cancelled by the publisher at the request of the author.

THERE'S NO PLACE

Patrick Stewart goes back to where it all began

IT'S IMPORTANT TO EVERYONE THAT EACH OF US HAS A PLACE where we feel we belong—a place we can go back to when we just need a bit of peace and quiet. If you regularly travel the galaxy and explore strange new worlds, then it is even more important to have a place called 'home.'

For Captain Jean-Luc Picard it was the vineyards of France, but for Patrick Stewart it's a different matter entirely.

Patrick Stewart is *not* Captain Jean-Luc Picard of the Starship Enterprise. He may have played the character for the good part of a decade, but he was already an accomplished actor with a history of outstanding performances behind him.

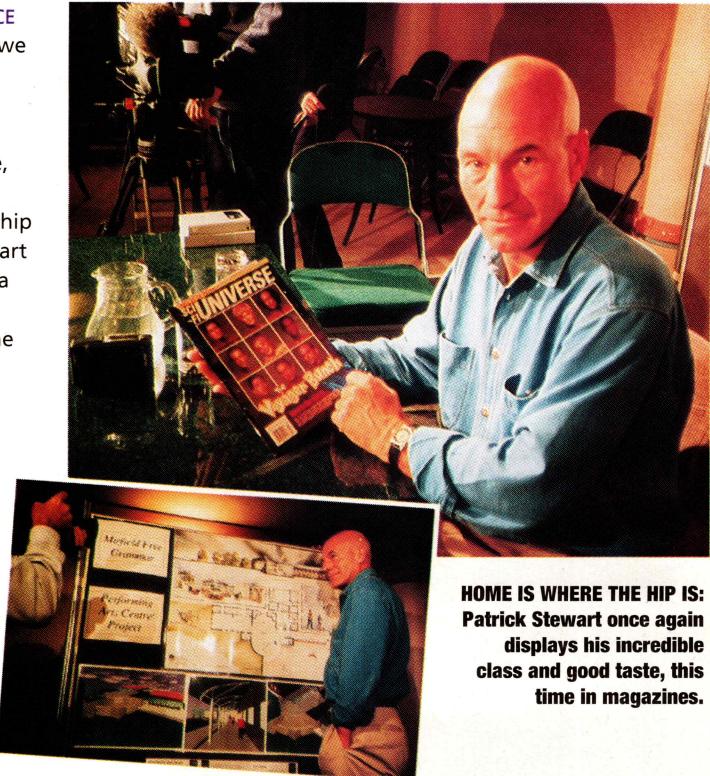
Nor did Stewart grow up on the planet Cardassia or on the bleak Deep Space Nine. He is, in fact, from my neck of the woods. He grew up in Mirfield, which is in Yorkshire in the North of England, and returned to the area recently to give something back to the area which first stirred his yearnings to become an actor.

His old school, Mirfield Free Grammar School (or Secondary Modern, as it was called at the time), is planning a huge Performing Arts Center and Stewart agreed to perform his one-man show to raise money for the project. In fact, Stewart decided he would perform two shows and did so last September at the impressive Lawrence Bately Theater in the heart of nearby Huddersfield.

"It is an ideal opportunity for me to return to my hometown in a way which can be of some significant value," the actor admits. "I still feel very much a native of this part of Yorkshire and I carry it with me wherever I go. To now return and support the building of what will be a truly magnificent venture, which is going to benefit not only the school but also the entire community, is doubly important to me as it was the local authority which found the money to send me to drama school."

Stewart said he also owes a personal debt of gratitude to his English teacher Cecil Dormand, who came to watch him perform at the benefit shows. "It was Cecil who cornered me in the old school hall in my last year of school and asked me whether I'd ever thought of becoming a professional actor," said Stewart. "Of course I hadn't. It was a ludicrous idea. I didn't know anyone who had ever become a professional actor. Even though I loved what I did, I didn't allow myself that fantasy because it wasn't a remote possibility. Cecil Dormand had first put a copy of Shakespeare in my hand and said 'Don't read it to yourself, read it aloud so we can all hear!'"

Thankfully Stewart followed his teacher's advice and went on to an acclaimed career. He has starred in movies such as *Dune*, *Excalibur* and *L.A. Story*, classic British Television series such as *I, Claudius*, *Tinker-Tailor-Soldier-Spy* (with Alec Guinness) and its sequel *Smiley's People*, and has received



HOME IS WHERE THE HIP IS:
Patrick Stewart once again displays his incredible class and good taste, this time in magazines.

numerous plaudits for his stage performances on both sides of the Atlantic.

"It's very important to come back here. It becomes more so with every year that goes by," Stewart told me. "I consider myself very fortunate to have the career that I have had in the last ten years. The move to Hollywood was unexpected and unlooked for and took me as much by surprise as anyone else. I can remember quite distinctly, about three years ago, one miserable, hot and smoggy afternoon...I was driving on the freeway in Los Angeles and not feeling very happy. I tried to explain to somebody once how it is when you live abroad. You wake up every morning and there are a million things that remind you that you're not at home—that you're an alien!"

"To keep one foot firmly anchored here in Yorkshire has now become very important to me. My home has become truly a source of regeneration for me in every possible way."

Though, for obvious reasons, Stewart doesn't want the location of his new abode descended on by fans, he is willing to admit that it is in the North Yorkshire area, a picturesque area of sweeping hills and valleys, classic scenery and...low-flying aircraft?

LIKE HOME

When I met Stewart during his promotional tour for *Generations*, he admitted that the only problem with his new home was that it seemed to be on the flight path from the local RAF base. Jet fighters would fly low, along the valley and then literally up and over his home.

At the time William Shatner commented, "I told him to go to the head of the RAF base and say 'I'm Patrick

the punishing schedule of finishing the final season of the series and then going straight into the motion picture was not one he wanted to repeat. Despite his obvious love for the character of Picard, he wanted to put some distance between them for a while.

"Yes, I'm not happy actually," said Stewart. "I'm still whining about that. But it looks like the juggernaut that is *Star Trek* has overwhelmed me. So far as

"I have a feeling that the kind of things that have happened to me in the last 18 months will affect the way I feel about Jean-Luc. I'm sure I'll have to work at it a little harder than I've had to in the past."

Stewart, Captain Picard of the Enterprise...could you move your training routes a mile down the way?" After all, what could he say to that?"

The next time Stewart returned home, he found to his dismay that the jets would now be flying day and night. I asked Stewart for an update.

"Oh dear!" Stewart laughed as he buried his head in his hands. "One tries to edit the things you say on those occasions and I regret ever mentioning that because it wasn't really a problem. I got into so much trouble about that! It was largely something stirred up by my *Star Trek* colleague Michael Dorn who is a pilot. My impression is that, since then, my house is now a kind of landmark and target. Actually I have come to enjoy those visits from the RAF. Please quote me when I say I'm very happy with everything the RAF is doing!"

There have been some rumors that Stewart's participation in the next *Star Trek* movie was open to question. After all, the actor had made no secret that

I am aware, the plan is now to begin filming in April or May for a Thanksgiving release in the United States with a February 1997 date for Britain. So it will, actually be two years afterwards. I will have been away from it for 18 months, doing a lot of other work. I'm very interested to see how all of that work will have affected my feelings about the role. I'm looking forward to it. I'm very proud of everything we did on *Next Generation*. I have a feeling that the kind of things that have happened to me in the last 18 months will affect the way I feel about Jean-Luc. I'm sure I'll have to work at it a little harder than I have been doing, because in the past he became so much a part of me that once I was in my 'space-suit' and walked onto the bridge, I knew who I was and where I was. I'm not sure that will happen again so simply."

Adds Stewart, "The best thing about it will be being reunited with the rest of the cast, because I miss them."

—John Mosby

FAN PROFILE

by Jon Bradley Snyder

Name: Dave Yuers

Main Vein: *The Omega Man*

Age: 30

Home Planet: Oakland, California

Nickname: None

Turn-ons: Grace Kelly, Jessica Rabbit, Betty Page, Brinke Stevens, Country Blues Rock (Skynyrd, ZZ TOP, Kentucky Headhunters, Nugent), Pontiac GTOs, Guinness Stout, Skydiving, anything painted by Vargas.

Turn-offs: Tuna, *Doctor Who*, peace signs, pink triangles, nose rings, draft dodgers, Janet Reno, flat beer, gun-grabbers, PETA and Billary.

Best Sci-Fi Creations of the Past Year: The recent laserdisc release of *The Omega Man* and *Judge Dredd*.

The Focus of All Evil in the Universe: 21st Century Productions—the wonderful folks who brought us the cretinous *Punisher* and *Captain America* movies, and the same greedy bums who are denying us *Spiderman*'s screen incarnation (to be directed by the brilliant James Cameron) because they insist on more money for the rights.

Greatest Fan Indulgence: Crashing a party Charlton Heston was attending and discussing the political nuances of *The Omega Man* with him. I was pleasantly surprised to hear him agree with my own take on the movie.

One Thing the Future Can't Bring Fast Enough: The McDonnell Douglas Delta Clipper Passenger Space Vehicle, the return of the Raiders to Oakland [Happened—Ed.], a Republican President and the collapse of Castro's regime.

Describe why you are passionate about *The Omega Man*: It works on so many levels. It's a great action movie and it even works in its attempts at humor (i.e., Heston's being forced to watch *Woodstock*, the only movie in town). It's effective science fiction. I find it unequaled by any other "last man on earth" film. It has social commentary, especially in the rooftop debate between Neville and Ritchie. Ritchie is a naive young liberal who ends up on a meathook. It's politically layered: there's Charlton Heston, with his military hat and his embrace of Western Civilization, and his enemy is a liberal media icon who has experience in manipulating the masses.

Of course, being a Charlton Heston movie, *The Omega Man* even has religious overtones. A child asks Neville if he is God. He will be in the myths she passes down to posterity — indeed, he will be "Legend" (in a nod to the source novel *I am Legend*). He is pierced by a spear. His blood is the salvation of the human race. He dies in a cruciform pose.

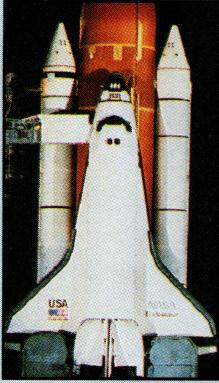
The opinions expressed in this column do not necessarily (in fact, definitely do not) represent the opinions of SCI-FI UNIVERSE or its editors...for reasons too extensive to outline here.



CHUCK AMOK: Superfan David Yuers sneaks into a black tie function to confront Charlton Heston about *The Omega Man*.

Andrew's UNIVERSAL REPORT

SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY. *Tales of the Impossible* writer Kevin J. Anderson, who has made a successful career of writing media tie-in novels (*X-Files*, *Star Wars*), as well as acclaimed original fiction, can now add screenwriter to his ever-burgeoning resume. MCA/Universal has optioned Anderson's original work *Ignition*, which he likens to *Die Hard* at the Kennedy Space Center. Grounded astronauts fight terrorists who are trying to blow up the space shuttle.



E.T. INVASION. *Waterworld* cost \$100 million, but *Waterworld* scribe David Twohy's first feature *Shockwave* will only cost a mere \$25 mil. But don't expect a pared-down vision—Twohy says that he's exploring a road not taken previously by sci-fi scribes: radio astronomy.

"Many science fiction movies have astronomers looking through eyepieces. That doesn't happen anymore. Astronomers will listen to signals from stars on radios," says Twohy, calling from the film's set in Mexico City where 40 percent of the film takes place.

In *Shockwave*, radio astronomer Charlie Sheen hears an incredible signal on his radio and follows the signal to the jungles of Mexico where aliens are terraforming the earth so they can stop shivering in our cold weather.

Oh yeah, they also want to take over the planet.

TAPERT'S ANGEL. Harkening back to the days when it was safe to ogle female detectives, Renaissance Pictures (who gave us *Hercules* and *Xena*) will be producing a show for ABC in 1996. *Lorne & Max* follows super-spies Lorne and Maxine, who save the world each week while engaging in a friendly love triangle rivalry which includes the gorgeous spies and their mysterious boss Alex.

Renaissance Picture's Rob Tapert describes it as an American *Avengers*. Sounds like *Charlie's Angels* to us. And that's not a bad thing either.

MAGIC MAN. He's an illusionist and Mr. Claudia Schiffer. And now David Copperfield is pulling a new trick out of his hat—he's also a short story writer.

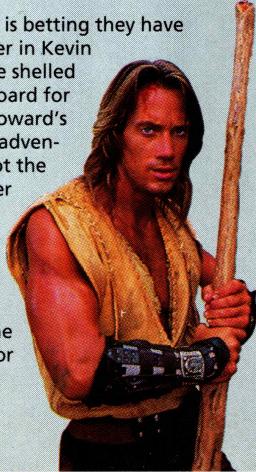
Copperfield has written a story for *Tales of the Impossible*, which he has co-edited with writer Janet Berliner. Other writers contributing magic-related stories to this anthology include Ray Bradbury, Kevin J. Anderson, Joyce Carol Oates and the late *X-Men* creator Jack Kirby.

Of course, there is more than meets the eye to *Tales of the Impossible*—Berliner also thinks the book could segue into a nifty *Twilight Zone* type TV show. "I originally thought of David as the Rod Serling of magic," says Berliner, who at press time was fielding TV offers.

Meanwhile Copperfield is juggling the many jobs of magician, novice writer and, perhaps, being the new Rod Serling. "Stranger things have happened," says Copperfield.

CONAN TOO. Universal Pictures is betting they have the next Arnold Schwarzenegger in Kevin Sorbo of *Hercules* fame. They've shelled out big bucks to get Sorbo onboard for their adaptation of Robert E. Howard's *King Kull*, a *Conan*-like fantasy adventure. Sorbo is scheduled to shoot the film in New Zealand this summer while on hiatus from shooting *Hercules*.

EVIL EVADER. Ed Naha is proof that there is hope for all struggling sci-fi magazine writers. The former *Starlog* writer and author



has created a new adventure television series to be based on legendary sailor Sinbad.

Naha promises, "The look of the show is going to have that special quality that watching a Technicolor Saturday matinee used to have. But the tone is going to be very current. This show's Sinbad won't react in a melodramatic way."

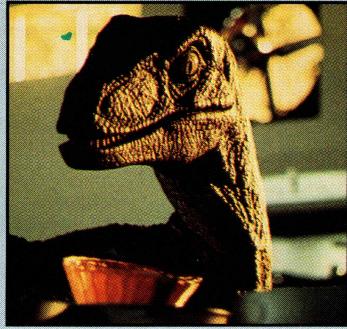
Naha says that Sinbad will travel out of the Arabian world to places such as Celtic England. Of course, there will be a lot of monsters. "I'm a super Harryhausen freak," says Naha on the legendary stop motion king whose *Sinbad* creatures immortalized him in the annals of genre filmmaking.

The show will tentatively air in fall of '96 and is produced by All-American TV, the folks that bring you *Baywatch*.

SINBAD TOO. While Ed Naha labors on his television version of *Sinbad*, *Baby's Day Out* helmer Patrick Reed Johnson is busy developing Sinbad as a big-budget feature property with state-of-the-art effects. It looks as though Sinbad will be back in a big way '96.

LOST & FOUND. Some thought that Steven Spielberg may have lost interest in pre-history after completing *Schindler's List*, but the director will return to helm the *Jurassic Park* sequel *The Lost World: World*.

is scheduled to be shot sometime in September '96 and will unspool in the summer of 1997.



The only cast member from *Jurassic Park* who will return is Jeff Goldblum, reprising his role as wisecracking scientist Ian Malcolm. This time Malcolm is exploring theories of natural extinction with a new group of scientists. The scientists are shaken out of their ivory tower when they meet a group of businessmen who want to clone dinosaurs for big game hunting.

Apparently, Spielberg is also flirting with other science fiction projects including a killer asteroid thriller entitled *Deep Impact* that was inspired by *When Worlds Collide*. This leaves Paramount's latest *Indiana Jones* installment in limbo, despite finally having a shooting script from Jeffrey Boam that has met with the approval of George Lucas, Harrison Ford and Spielberg.

GOING, GOING, GONE. The steps people take to sell sci-fi scripts is crazy. MGM creative VP Mark Protosevich slipped his sci-fi script into MGM's decision-making mill with no one the wiser except for MGM boss Mike Marcus. The script, which was submitted under a pseudonym, follows the adventures of a female scientist who catches a killer by getting into the killer's mind.

The VP's ruse worked and MGM bought the script for \$400,000. It's Protosevich's first script...but one suspects not his last.

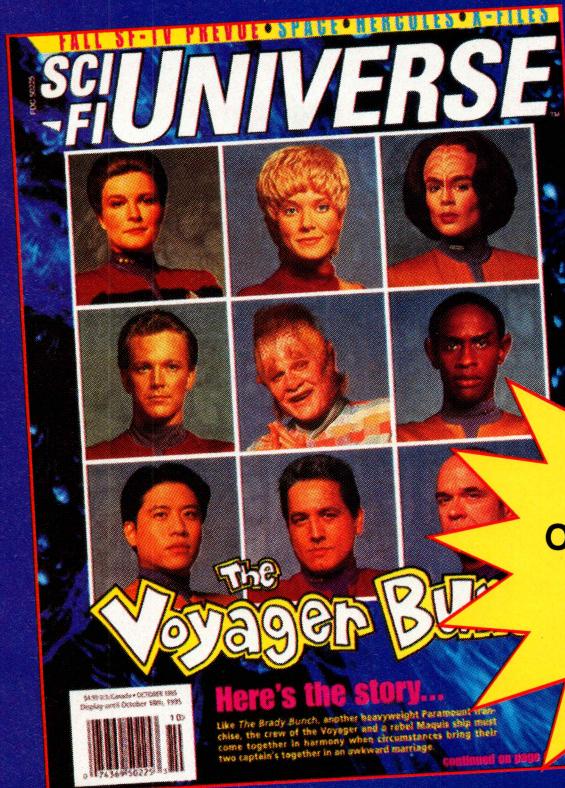
MAD MILLER. Aussie auteur George Miller, the man behind such eclectic fare as *The Witches of Eastwick* to *Lorenzo's Oil* is bringing Mad Max to television. While Mel Gibson obviously won't be involved with the project, Miller, who directed all three *Mad Max* films, will executive produce the series based on the post apocalyptic character he created for *Mad Max*, *The Road Warrior* and *Beyond Thunderdome*.

The series, which will be produced by Warner Bros., is expected to be ready for first-run syndication in late '96.

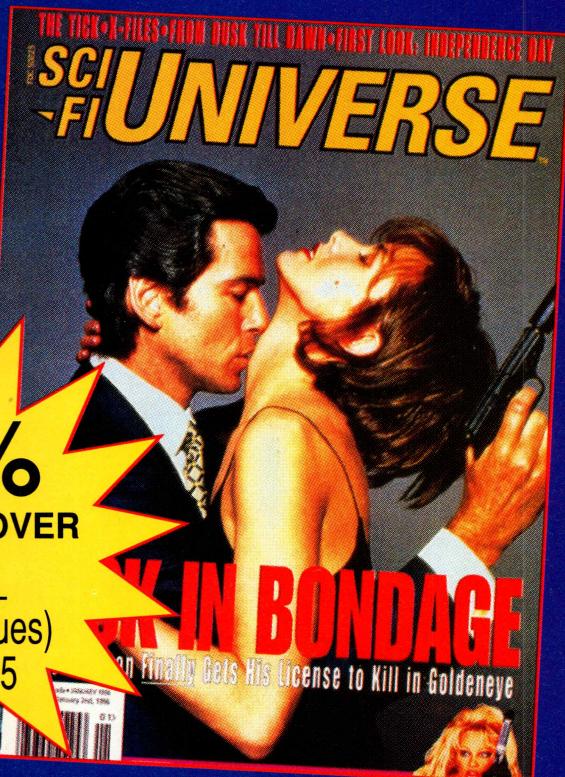
—Reporting by Andrew Asch with Andrew O. Thompson, Mark Altman and Mitchell Rubinstein

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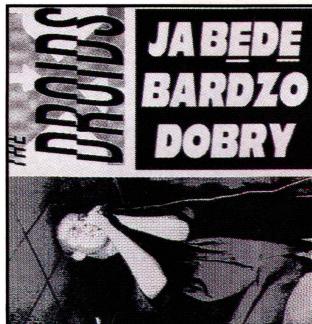
KOOL SCI-FI



COOL MUSIC

The Droids

Another entry into my all-time favorite sub-genre of contemporary music: *Star Wars* punk. The Droids hail from Wisconsin and sing half their songs in Polish! Need I say more? Their new single "Ja Bede Bardzo Dobry" is available for \$3 postpaid from Power Ground Records, 1309 S. 21 St., Manitowac WI 54220. Make all check or money orders out to Eric A. Plekan.



COOL ALCOHOL

Drakula Vodka

OK, so this ain't exactly Russian, but it's the spirit (or spirits) that counts. The ultra-spooky Drakula Vodka is bottled in Poland by Polmos Krakow. As if naming an alcoholic beverage after a famous fantasy character weren't cool enough, this stuff is actually good. It's the best vodka I've ever had!

Mix it half-and-half with orange juice and you can't even taste it! I don't know if you can tell from the photo, but this bottle is half-empty. That's because, like every Cool Sci-Fi item, it's undergone strenuous testing by me. And if you aren't old enough to drink yet, you can still admire the spiffy label with its howlin' wolf and scary vampire bat.

COOL PUZZLE

Russian Shuttle Space Puzzle

Sure, Americans may have the space shuttle (and we may not strand our astronauts in space because we don't have enough money to get them down), but I seriously doubt whether we, as Americans, appreciate our space program as much



as the Russians appreciate theirs. Look at all the cool monuments they've made to their space achievements! They take it seriously for heaven's sake; we take it for granted.

And it's not just the big stuff like monuments—this attitude trickles down to the trinkets too. Look at this cool Russian space jigsaw puzzle, for example. It depicts the great Russian space shuttle. "What Russian space shuttle?" you may ask. Well, that's one of the reasons it's Cool Sci-Fi—the Russians have never launched a space shuttle and probably never will.

The Memorial Museum of the Astronautics in Moscow is full of neat stuff like this. It's all super cheap too, which is more than I can say for gift shops in Houston or Cape Canaveral. Smile and wave to the happy Cosmonaut!

COOL VIDEOS

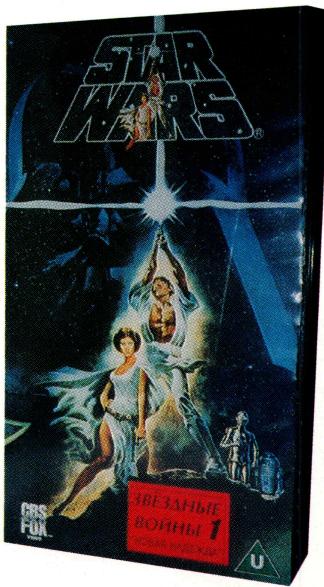
Bootleg Videos

God bless the former Soviet Republics, land of copyright anarchy. I must admit there are moments when I, as a U.S. citizen, feel a tinge of guilt that our American culture is shoved down the throat of every foreign country that has electricity and TV sets. But then I travel the globe and see that many of these underdeveloped nations are illegally bootlegging American culture and selling it back to us at rock-bottom prices. It makes me feel all warm and fuzzy inside. It's a kind of poetic justice.

And I assure you that nothing is more poetic than bootlegged copies of the *Star Wars* trilogy dubbed in Russian. Basically what they do is sit a guy in a room with the video and he repeats, in dull monotone Russian, all the character's lines after they speak them. You can still hear the original English soundtrack under-

neath. Hey, it's cheaper than subtitles.

I read in *USA Today* that *Waterworld* was available on the streets of Moscow before it was released in theaters in the U.S. I didn't believe it until my pal Julie actually brought me back a copy from her vacation. The bootleg Russian version is letterboxed (classy!) and is longer than the U.S. theatrical release. It cost me 30 bucks to get it transferred from PAL, but for a Russian grammar lesson from Kevin Costner, it was worth it!



COOL SCI-FI

What's Hot in the Sci-Fi Universe (a/k/a How to Spend the Rent Money)

BY JON BRADLEY SNYDER

Rubles



COOL COMIC

Russian *Star Wars* Comic

After seeing these fabulous Russianized version of *Star Wars*, there can be no doubt that *Star Wars* crosses all borders and cultural boundaries. In this (very) unauthorized comic, everything has been re-drawn to look more like it came from Mother Russia. X-wings bear an odd resemblance to Russian MIG fighters, Chewbacca has been transformed into a big bear who wears pants and all the men have these huge peasant chins.

Best, however, is that the character that says Wedge's lines now resembles a huge talking gerbil in a Charlie Brown T-shirt. My friend Kathleen Charla, who has a doctorate in Slavic languages, helped me translate the book. It turns out that most of the dialogue is very faithful to the film (except an Uncle Owen remark about farm work—you mean “moisture vaporators!”). It was published in 1994 in St. Petersburg. The artist's name is V.S. Zaparenko. In the back there is a contest where the first prize is a cruise to Finland!

It's hard to express how much I love this comic. If anyone can find me the *Empire* and *Jedi* issues they can have my firstborn.

If you have something you'd like to submit to us at Cool Sci-Fi, send it to Jon Bradley Snyder, c/o Cool Sci-Fi, 2300 Market St., #23, San Francisco, CA 94114.

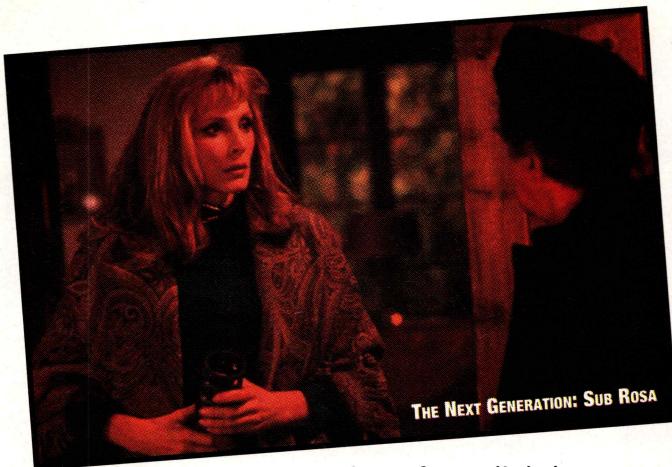
VOICE OF A GENERATION



A candid, off-the-cuff conversation
with *Voyager* Supervising
Producer **BRANNON BRAGA**

Brannon Braga greets me outside his office wearing the same shirt he wore to our interview the evening before, hair standing slightly on end. "Pretty disgusting, isn't it?" he comments on his appearance and then shrugs as a way of explanation. "I had to be at work early this morning." Supervising producer of the fledgling *Star Trek: Voyager* series and co-writer of the upcoming *Star Trek* feature film, the thirty-year-old Braga has become used to early mornings and late nights. His first screenwriting credit for a major motion picture, *Star Trek: Generations* (co-written by *Deep Space Nine* supervising producer Ronald D. Moore) has earned the writing team the Sci-Fi UNIVERSE Readers Choice Award for 1995's Best Genre Screenplay. I catch up with Braga during Halloween weekend in Los Angeles.

by Amanda J. Hall



THE NEXT GENERATION: SUB ROSA

that of our slightly stunned waitress, he returns to the question of

Generations. "Did you like it?" he asks.

I say that I thought it was very entertaining.

"**IT WAS FULL OF F---ING PLOT HOLES,**" he replies ruefully. He picks up a sugar packet from the bowl in the center of the table. "Let me ask you some trivia." He reads from the back of the packet, "What is the most common element on Earth?"

"Hydrogen?"

"Right!" He replaces that sugar packet and picks up another. "Which hitter earned the most home runs in his career?"

I have no idea. "Babe Ruth," I offer.

"No, Joe DiMaggio." He pushes the sugar bowl toward me. "Now you ask me some."

Beginning to understand the patience this interview will require, I reach for a sugar packet and turn it over. And over. There are no trivia questions. He has been making them up. "**OK, ALL I WANT TO KNOW IS WHY, IF HE CAN GO ANYWHERE IN SPACE AND TIME, DOES PICARD GIVE HIMSELF A MERE TEN MINUTES TO DEFEAT SORAN?**" I ask.

It appears my question is one he's heard before. "That's one of the plot holes, unfortunately. There was a speech in the movie that explained all that," he says with a hint of irritation. "But we cut it. You know, it's the Prime Directive. You can't go screwing up the time line. He can't go back to when Soran was born; the further back he goes, the more he risks. We cut the speech, because it was too expositional and a little boring." He has been drawing a gruesome Halloween ghoul for me on my notepad. It's not bad, actually. "Now, don't throw this away," he warns, autographing it.

"What about the next movie?"

"It's a Borg movie, and none of the original series cast will return. I can't tell you any more than that. **I CAN TELL YOU THAT, TENTATIVELY, WE BEGIN SHOOTING IN APRIL.**" HE SEEKS EXCITED AT THE IDEA.

As we sit down for a meal at a vegetarian restaurant of his choice, I ask Braga how he feels about the movie now. He starts to answer but instead stops, looks up and around and comments, "This lighting in here is really terrible, isn't it?"

Enormous naked yellow bulbs dot the interior of the dining area. "They're like big bug lights. I bet I look awful in this lighting. **I BET I LOOK SALLOW. DO I LOOK SALLOW TO YOU?"**

I assure him that his complexion is as rosy as ever, and after several reassurances, including



STAR TREK: GENERATIONS



Unable to wheedle another hint out of him about the movie, I turn to *Voyager*. The flagship of the United Paramount Network, the newcomer series has enjoyed the press spotlight for more than a year. Braga says that with nearly thirty years of *Star Trek* under Paramount's collective belt, he felt the pressure to deliver this newest incarnation fully formed.

"I feel that *Voyager* should be the *X-Files* of *Star Trek*—the Delta Quadrant should be the strangest place we've ever seen." Braga is quiet a moment. "Instead, the aliens look a little too familiar, and we're not delivering enough high-concept science fiction. Don't get me wrong: we've had many excellent episodes, but I want to do more brain-twisting, challenging stories."

"Don't you think you're being a little hard on the show?" I ask. "After all, it's still very young."

"Yes, but *Star Trek* isn't. We just want to make sure we keep telling the best science fiction stories we can. That's the *Star Trek* tradition, and that's what *Star Trek* fans have come to expect. I don't mean to sound negative. I'm very proud of the show. We all are, but when you're a writer working on a franchise that's done over 300 episodes, you have to give your stories a great deal of scrutiny. It's that kind of scrutiny that will keep it fresh."

Braga isn't the only one scrutinizing the show. Since its inception—and the widely publicized decision to hire a female captain—*Star Trek: Voyager* has faced criticism in certain circles for being "too PC." Populating the sleek ship's bridge are a Native American First Officer, an Asian American, and the first black Vulcan we've seen—all in addition to Kate Mulgrew as Captain Kathryn Janeway. I ask Braga for his reaction to this criticism.

"That's a good question, and I have mixed feelings about it. The whole idea of political correctness has been taken to histrionic extremes; we're seeing a backlash to that right now. Some of it is positive; maybe in the future we won't have to walk around on eggshells all the time. And some of it is very definitely negative—like affirmative action being eradicated. However, I don't think that *Star Trek* should be caught up in that backlash. *Star Trek* has always made strides in diversity, and those strides predate terms like 'PC.' You simply cannot create a new *Star Trek* series without making those strides. *Deep Space Nine* put a black man in charge; *Voyager* put a woman in the captain's chair and a Native American on the bridge. I firmly stand behind our multi-ethnicity."

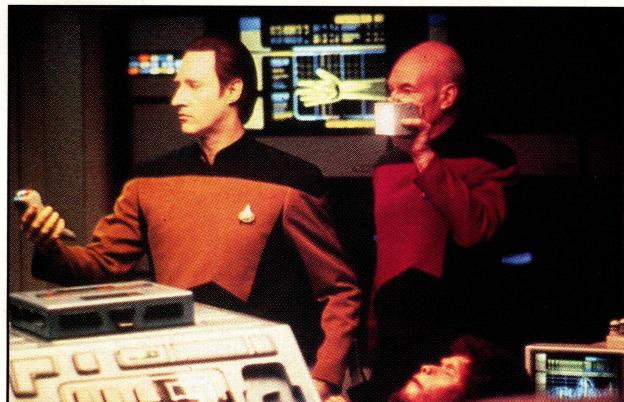
When I inquire which episodes of *Voyager* he has been most happy with, once again he turns the tables, asking me which were my favorites. I suggest the *Beowulf* episode, *Heroes and Demons*.

"Yeah, I liked that one too," he says. "Also I thought that *Emanations* was good. That's where we find that our reality is an alien dimensions afterlife. And I enjoyed *Elogium*." Braga comments that he's also very pleasantly surprised with the direction that the Doctor has taken. "When we started," he adds, "we didn't know what we were going to do with him." Now the holographic Doctor, played superbly by Robert Picardo, has become one of the most popular characters in *Star Trek*, providing a humorous sparkle to the show that was never a part of his character's original plan. "I believe all the characters are very strong," he continues. "Now I want the scripts to deliver."

The following afternoon, I find myself back in Braga's office, the bizarre contents of which I have been barred from disclosing. He is a disheveled mirror of his surroundings, closer to the picture of a graduate film student than a television producer. Despite his complaints about an early morning and back-to-back meetings, he is chipper...and strange.

I ask if he has anything to add.

"Yes, you aren't wearing nylons today," is his unrelated reply. Before he can elaborate on this though, the phone, buried on his desk, rings. Immediately, the Dr. Seuss personality disappears, replaced in face and strained voice by a man unrecognizable as the one I've interviewed for hours, all business, hushed in tone, formal even. It seems his meetings aren't over. He hangs up the phone and sighs. "I guess I've got to go," he says apologetically. "It's going to be another long day." 



ANIMAL FARM: Braga's script for TNG'S *Genesis* turned the crew into de-evolving primates.

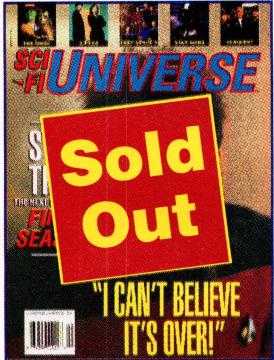
"I feel that *Voyager* should be the *X-Files* of *STAR TREK*—the Delta Quadrant should be the strangest place we've ever seen. Instead, the aliens look a little too familiar, and we're not delivering enough high-concept science fiction."



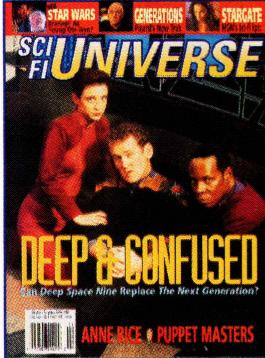
THE DOCTOR IS OUT: Braga's *Parallax* script for *Voyager* turned Robert Picardo into the incredibly shrinking doctor.

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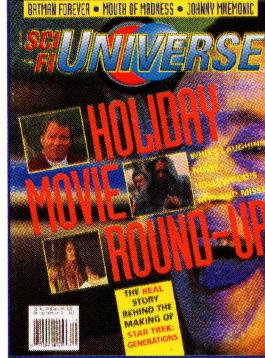
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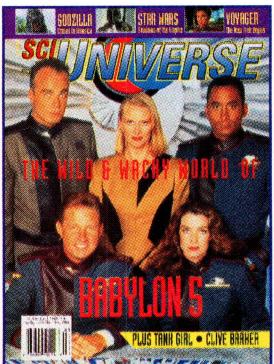
September 1994
STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION.
A look back at the final season. Also: *X-Files*.



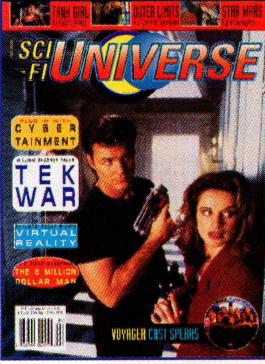
November 1994
DEEP SPACE NINE.
Exhaustive episode guide, plus feature, "Deep & Confused." Also: *Stargate*, Trent Reznor on *Dead at 21* and Anne Rice interviewed!



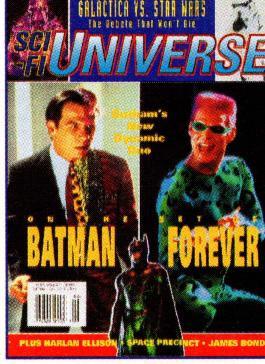
January 1995
HOLIDAY MOVIE ROUNDUP.
Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and *Star Trek: Generations*. Also: *Interview With the Vampire*, *Johnny Mnemonic*, *Sliders* and *In the Mouth of Madness*.



March 1995
BABYLON 5.
Also: *Star Trek: Generations*, Clive Barker on *Lord of Illusions*, *Star Wars* music, *Twin Peaks*, *Godzilla* and *Voyager*.



April 1995
CYBERTAINMENT. *Tek-War*, Fox's *VR.5*, the new *Outer Limits* and *Tank Girl*. Also: a retrospective on *The Six Million Dollar Man*, plus the cast of *Voyager*.



June 1995
Galactica vs. Star Wars, *Batman Forever*, Galactica retrospective & Harlan Ellison

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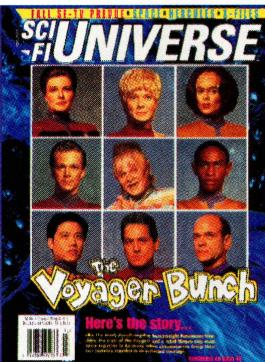
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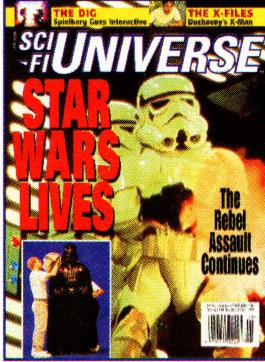
July 1995
SUMMER MOVIES
Batman, *Congo*, *Judge Dredd*, *Apollo 13* & *William Gibson*



August 1995
X-Files, *X-Files* episode guide, *Virtuosity*, *Waterworld*, *Species* & *Space Ghost*



October 1995
Voyager.
Complete episode guide, *Hercules*, *Space & X-Files*



November 1995
Star Wars, *Outer Limits*, *Rebel Assault II* & *Gargoyles*

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ERNIE HUDSON

Congo

1997

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR IN A FILM

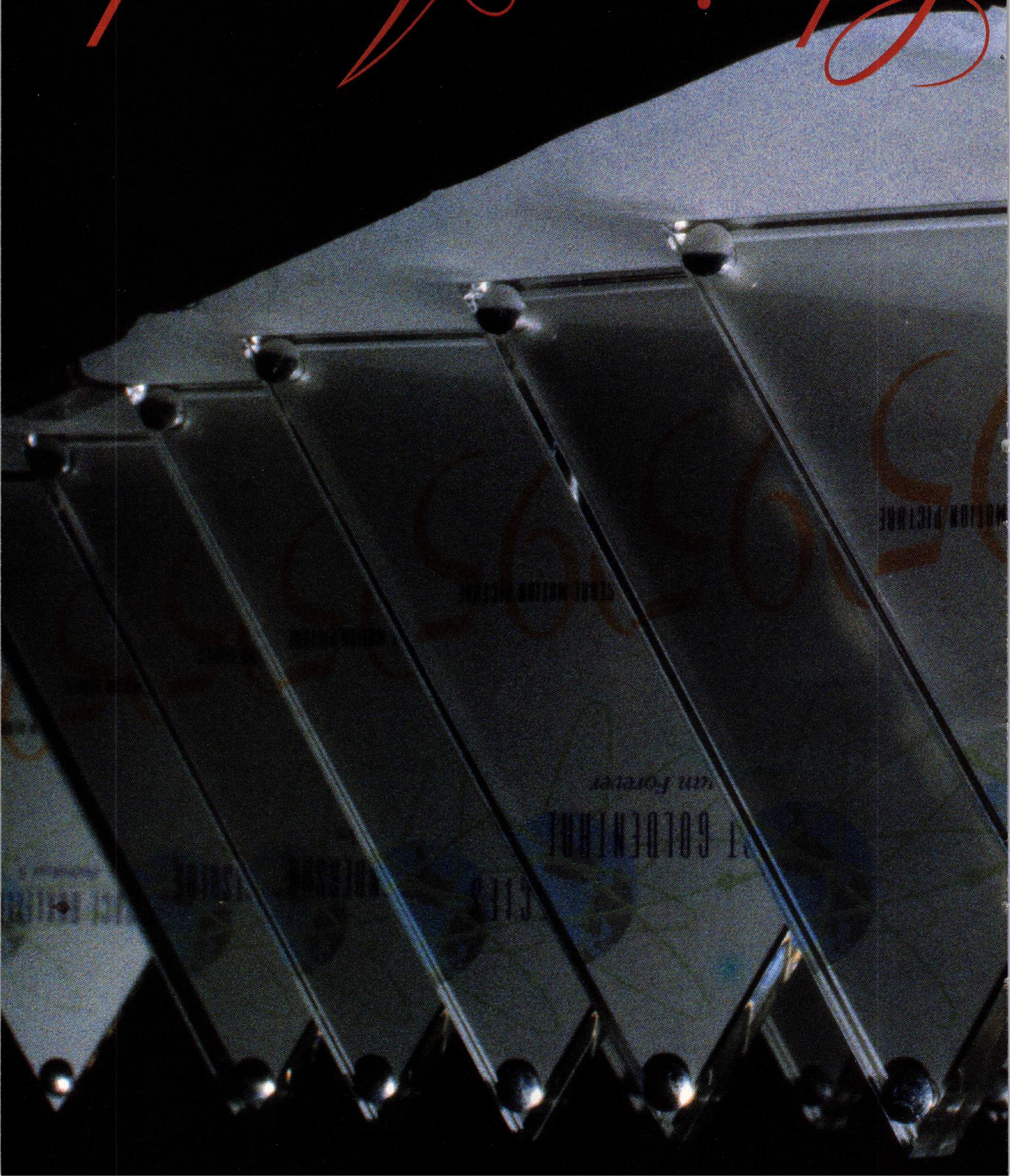
Sci-Fi Universe Readers' Choice
Universe Award

Sci-Fi Universe Readers' Choice

Universe Award

the first annual
Sci-Fi UNIVERSE,
Readers

Black & white



Black & white

SONDERLICHT
1100



On Saturday, October 28, 1995, Sci-Fi UNIVERSE presented the First Annual Sci-Fi UNIVERSE Readers' Choice Awards. Hosted by *Babylon 5*'s Bruce Boxleitner and *Deep Space Nine*'s Nana Visitor, the event was a huge success with both the luminaries in the genre in attendance to present and accept awards and the fans in the audience from across the world invited by the ConRad convention who donated their ticket sale proceeds to charity.

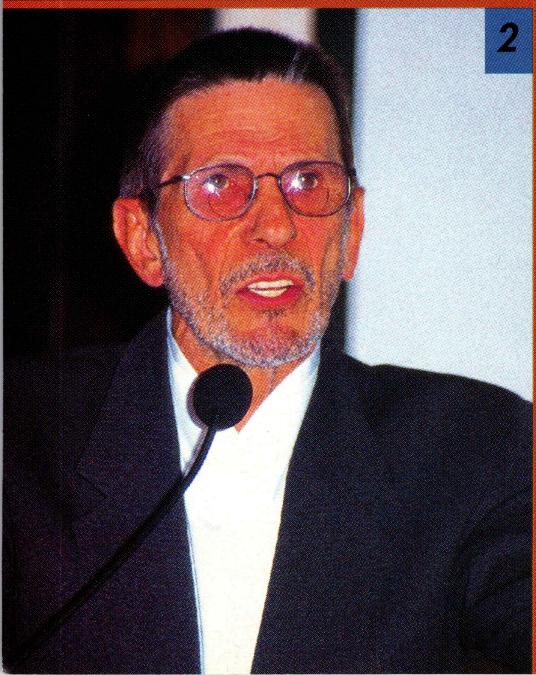
The Readers' Choice awards were voted on by readers of Sci-Fi UNIVERSE who sent in ballots printed in the August, 1995 issue. The results were published in the February issue of Sci-Fi UNIVERSE. The big winners for the evening included *Stargate*, *Babylon 5*, *The X-Files* and *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*.

1 A ravishing Nana Visitor, co-host of the awards ceremonies, shares a moment off-stage with fellow *Deep Space* thespian Alexander Siddig. It seems like only yesterday he was Siddig El Fadil.

2 Leonard Nimoy was on hand to accept his Editors' Choice Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Genre. The award was presented to him by UNIVERSE Editor-in-Chief Mark A. Altman and Nimoy's son, director Adam Nimoy.

3 Sci-fi fave Ernie Hudson [*The Crow*, *Ghostbusters*, *Spacehunter*], with his wife, was in attendance to accept his award for Best Supporting Actor In A Genre Film for Paramount Picture's *Congo*.

4 Rodney Rowland and Kristen Cloke were two members of the *Space: Above & Beyond* cast to present awards. *Space* producers James Wong and Glen Morgan took home trophies for Best Writing of a Genre Television Episode or Telefilm for their work on the *X-Files*' *Die Hand, Die Verletzt*.



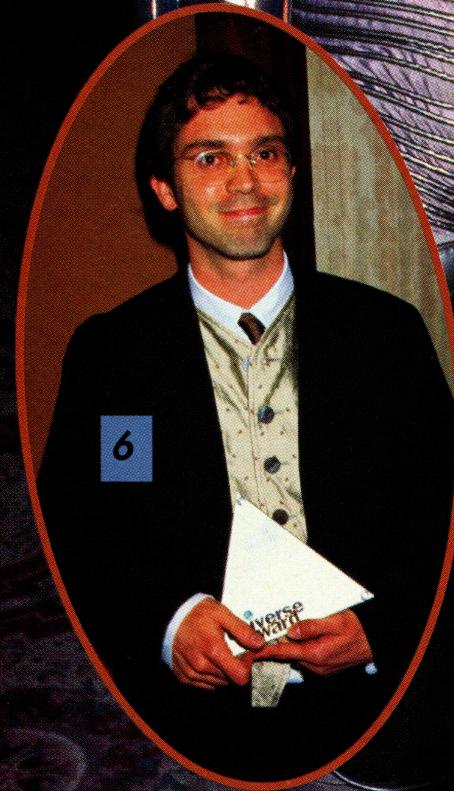


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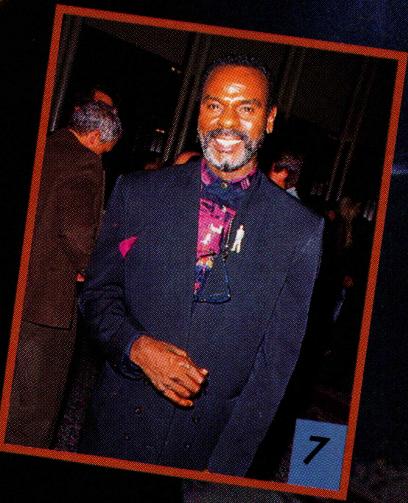
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6



7



5 The beautiful Terry Farrell, presenter for Best Fantasy Motion Picture, gets up close and personal with a Cylon, a *Battlestar Galactica* memento from noted sci-fi collector Roger Sides' personal collection.

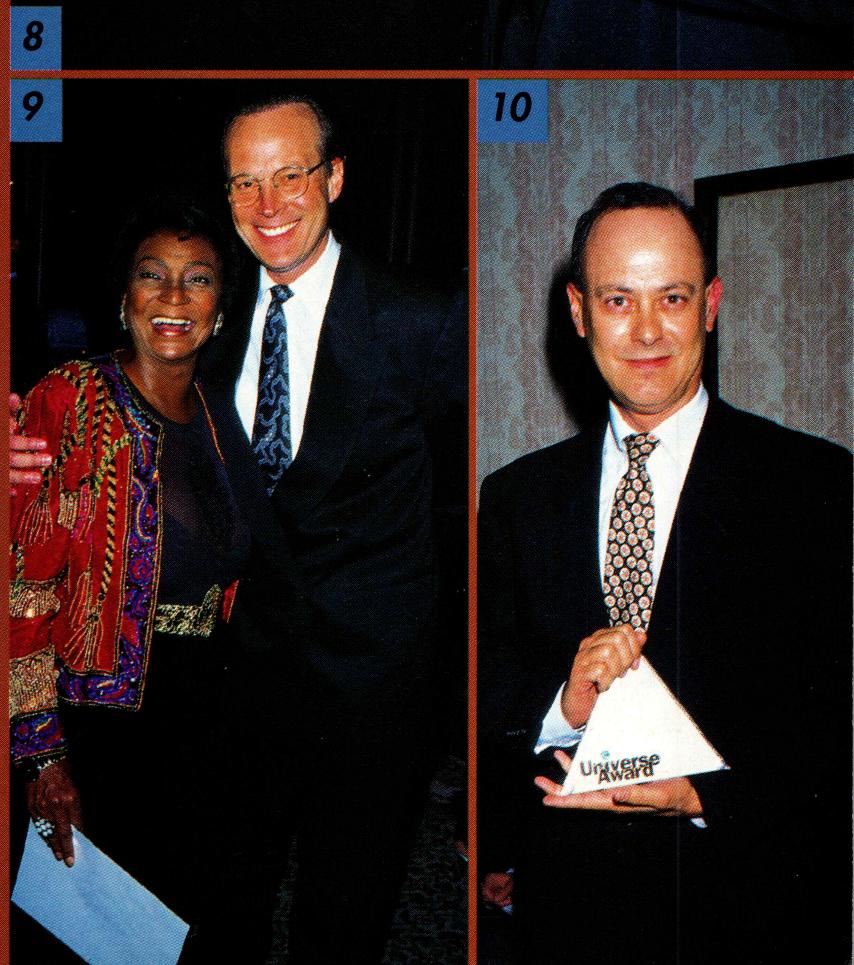
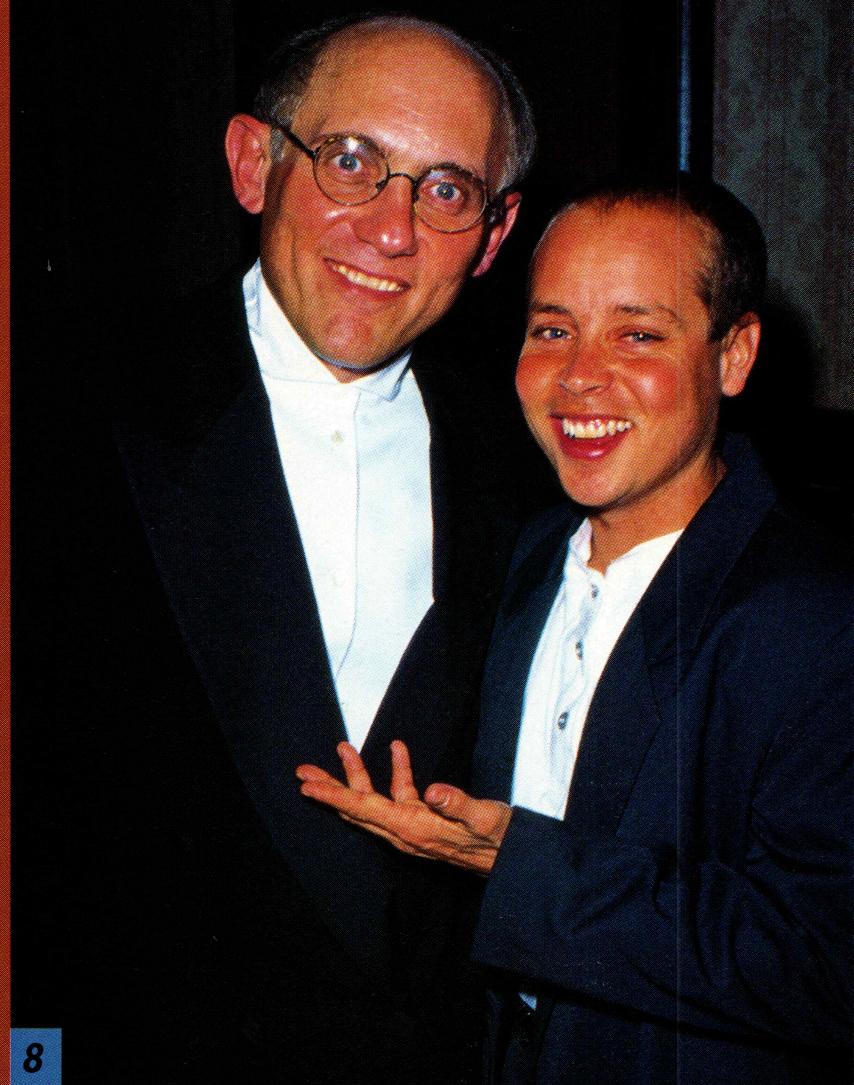
6 Brannon Braga accepted the award for *Best Screenplay for a Genre Motion Picture* on behalf of himself, Ronald D. Moore and Rick Berman for *Star Trek: Generations*, during which he thanked the fans for their support as well as "Larry Flynt, for getting me through high school."

7 Steve Williams, Mr. X from *The X-Files*, accepted Gillian Anderson's award for *Best Actress in a Genre Television Series or Telefilm* while she was off shooting in Vancouver.

8 Like Uncle, Like Nephew: Armin Shimerman, who plays Quark on *Deep Space Nine*, shares a laugh with Aron Eisenberg, *DS9's* Nog, both relieved to be out of make-up and presenting awards. Armin was nominated for *Best Supporting Actor in a Genre Television Series* and presented the *Best Horror Film* award to *Interview With The Vampire*.

9 Dwight Schultz (Barclay of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*) and Nichelle Nichols, both awards presenters, share a hug offstage. Nichelle laughed, "I hear Bill Shatner is working on a book called *Way Beyond Uhura*," before presenting the award for *Best Genre Television Series* to the *The X-Files* creative team.

10 Baseball fanatic Michael Piller took time off from watching the World Series to accept his *Gene L. Coon Award for Excellence in Science Fiction Writing*. The award honors the spirit of the late Gene L. Coon, whose legacy of brilliant, inventive and humanistic writing has been continued by Piller on series such as *The Next Generation*, *Deep Space Nine*, *Legend* and *Voyager*. Both William Campbell and Mark Altman spoke about Gene Coon's profound contributions to the genre before Piller's gracious acceptance speech.





11 Host Bruce Boxleitner, also a Readers' Choice award winner for Best Actor in a Genre Series (along with *X-Files* David Duchovny), laughs it up with *Taxi* and *B5* star Jeff Conaway.

12 *Babylon 5's* Richard Biggs and Felicia Bell (a/k/a Jennifer Sisko of *Deep Space Nine*) bridge the franchise gap at the *Universe Readers' Choice Awards*.

13 Peter Jurasik, *Babylon 5's* Londo, accepted Andreas Katsulas' award for Best Supporting Actor in a Genre Series, while amiably joshing host Bruce Boxleitner about his role in *Tron*. Afterwards, Jurasik joined fellow space station vet Alexander Siddig in the green room.

14 Claudia Christian vamps it up after presenting the Best Actor and Actress awards with *Film Threat* editor and *MTV Real World* veteran Dominic Griffin. "I've heard a rumor that Andrew Lloyd Webber is planning a musical version of *Babylon 5*," said Griffin. "That's true, the only problem is, it takes five years to perform," replied Christian.

15 Veteran actress Cameron (Ensign Kellogg of *The Next Generation*, *Pulp Fiction*) appeared on stage as the award's statuesque Trophy Presenter while Melanie Angel's dulcet tones provided the evening's voiceover announcements.

All photos (except for p. 24-25, #15) courtesy of Al Ortega/Celebrity Photo Agency. Awards photo courtesy of David E. Williams/American Cinematographer.

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CENTROPOLIS

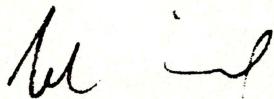
ENTERTAINMENT

Dear Sci-Fi Universe Readers;

Thank you so much for honoring us with the best Sci-Fi movie of the year award for "StarGate".

Any recognition that comes directly from the fans is the most treasured gift of all.

Kindest regards,

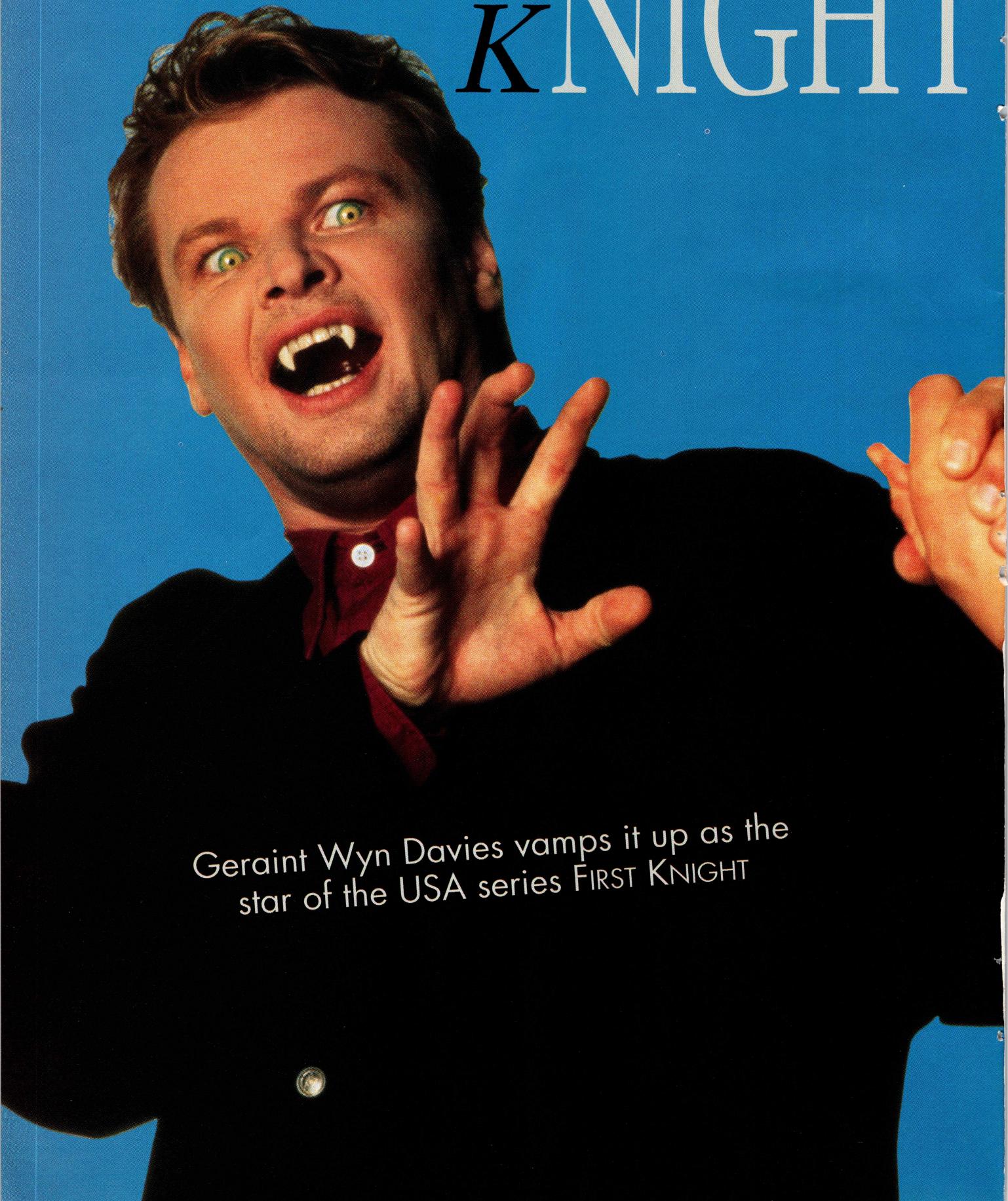


Roland Emmerich
Director/Writer



Dean Devlin
Producer/Writer

KNIGHT



Geraint Wyn Davies vamps it up as the
star of the USA series FIRST KNIGHT

TIME IS THE RIGHT TIME

Forever Knight, the popular cult series which chronicles the escapades of a 13th-century vampire who works as a Toronto

homicide detective, has just entered its third season and is gaining a rabid cult following. "Although the show is about a vampire, one could also say that it's about a disenfranchised outsider who's obviously alienated from the everyday world and who's fighting an ongoing addiction," says actor Wyn Davies about his character Nick Knight, who is constantly seeking to regain his lost mortality and rid himself of the savage bloodlust which has consumed him for more than seven hundred years. "That's something which is definitely attractive to those people who are struggling to become a part of today's society."

by Simon Bacal

As *Forever Knight*'s many fans know, Dr Natalie Lambert (Catherine Disher) is the only mortal who is privy to Knight's dark secret. Searching for a way to restore his humanity, while helping him to adjust to his new life, she describes his condition to outsiders as a severe allergy to sunlight.

"If this series were to jump five hundred years in the future, we would realize

to the more typical life of an evil vampire for a period of time."

Created by Barnett Cohen and James D. Parriott (who also serves as executive producer), the series initially ran for one season on CBS as part of the network's *Crimetime After Primetime* series of original late night programming. When *Knight* was canned by CBS, the show's many fans embarked on a major letter-writing campaign in an attempt to resurrect Nick Knight from the dead. As a result, further escapades involving the fanged cop—produced by Paragon Entertainment Corporation in association with TriStar Television and Germany's Telemünchen and distributed by Columbia TriStar

airplane bombing in *Black Buddah*, the season's two-part opener.

Their departure signalled the arrival of three new characters: Detective Tracy Vetter, (Lisa Ryder), Knight's new partner and the daughter of a very influential member of the police commission; Captain Joe Reese (Blu Mankuma); and vampire Javier Vachon (Ben Bass), a 16th-century youth who became a bloodsucker while in his early 20s.

"In establishing the characters and the relationships between those characters, the first season was a collective effort on the parts of cast and crew, and the second season enabled us to see how the formula worked," Wyn Davies notes. "Now that

"At conventions, I meet many intelligent fans. These people, who come from a good cross section of backgrounds and jobs, love the relationship between Nick and Natalie because Natalie mirrors their desire to learn more about this lost soul who is travelling through time."—Actor Geraint Wyn Davies

that Knight's activity as a cop is one period of his long existence, but he wouldn't necessarily be any closer to becoming human," Wyn Davies offers. "In fact, like those alcoholics and drug abusers who often fall off the wagon for a spell, he would probably go through a period of remission where he would revert

Television Distribution—rematerialized as a syndicated series in 1994.

Forever Knight's latest season—consisting of 22 original episodes—is airing on the USA Network and is in national syndication on more than 160 stations. Its burgeoning fan following is reflected by the attention it has received on computer bulletin boards on the Internet and such online services as Prodigy, America Online and CompuServe.

"At conventions, I meet many intelligent fans, aged anywhere from 18 to 45, who show an undivided loyalty to the series," Wyn Davies remarks. "These people, who come from a good cross section of backgrounds and jobs, love the relationship between Nick and Natalie because Natalie mirrors their desire to learn more about this lost soul who is travelling through time."

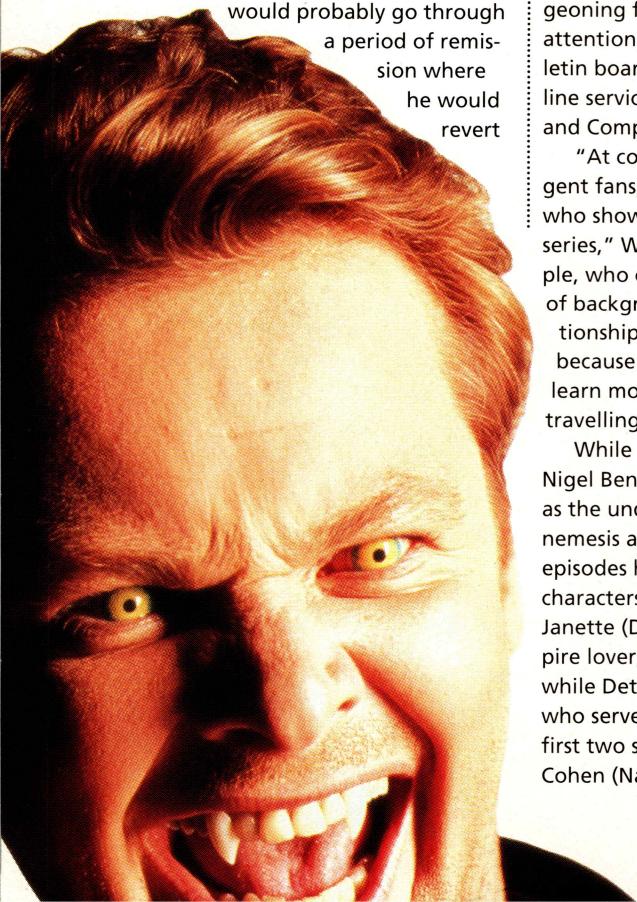
While Disher returns as Natalie and Nigel Bennett once again stalks the living as the undead Lacroix, Knight's ongoing nemesis and vampire master, the latest episodes hit the airwaves sans three major characters from three previous seasons. Janette (Deborah Duchane), Knight's vampire lover, has permanently left town, while Detective Schanke (John Kapelos), who served as Knight's partner for the first two seasons, and Captain Amanda Cohen (Natsuko Obama) are killed in an

we've reached the third season, one would think that we're familiar with those things which work and those elements which don't work. But, in many respects, we're going back to the first season because we have brand new characters and we have to establish fresh relationships between those characters."

One such relationship is sparked by the chemistry between Vetter and Vachon. After she learns that he is the only survivor to walk away from the crash—even though his body is initially tagged as dead—Vetter soon becomes privy to Vachon's undead mannerisms and realizes that her sensuality and emotions have been stirred and awakened by the creature. In return, Vachon, thanks to injuries sustained in the crash, is unable to erase Tracy's memories of his secret.

"At this time, he isn't her boyfriend per se, but he's certainly her informant, friend and someone who she can definitely trust," Ryder remarks. "In some respects, she wishes he could hypnotize her into forgetting that he's a vampire because she's not sure that a relationship between a vampire guy and a mortal woman can really go anywhere."

Ryder, who was attracted to the show's large dose of action, suspense and high drama, happily perceives her character as someone who loves to take risks.



"She always finds herself in trouble—she gets kidnapped, stabbed with a needle and ends up in shoot outs," Ryder adds. "The first episode deals with her first kill, but even though she gets laid off while internal affairs investigates the incident, she finds herself involved in another adventure when she goes undercover as an escort to find a killer."

When it comes to her character's relationship with Nick Knight, Ryder believes Tracy Vetter is somewhat akin to a mischievous little sister.

"They work very well together, but because Tracy is always taking off on her own, Nick is forced to rescue her from various situations. Nick doesn't know that I know about vampires and I don't know that he's a vampire, so it's certainly a strange relationship."

"I'd like to explore the relationship between Reese and Detective Vetter," says actor Blu Mankuma who portrays Reese. "Basically, Reese, who sees this position as a step up the ladder to the commissioner, is anxious to protect her because he obviously doesn't want anything to happen to her on his watch. So even though he perceives Nick as a hardened cop who can take care of himself, he feels responsible for Tracy's personal safety and growth as a police detective."

Although Reese has Vetter's best interest at heart, Mankuma explains that his character remains completely unaware about her relationship with Vachon, and, for that matter, is oblivious to the show's other vampires.

"He remains completely unaware of these creatures," Mankuma (who is himself becoming familiar with vampires' capabilities, namely their ability to fly and their knack for hearing sounds beyond human

hearing) elaborates. "That's a really neat trait to the character because he's looking left and these things are flying over his right shoulder. If he ever does come face-to-face with a vampire, he will probably have to go and sit by the water for a few minutes to collect his thoughts together, but, quite honestly, I'm going to make [the writers and producers] steer him in the other direction. As a veteran cop, he's seen a lot of strange things, so, like those people who have some rational explanation for UFOs, he feels there's always some normal explanation for those things which appear supernatural."

In reflecting on his character, Mankuma is especially drawn to Reese's sense of humor and wit.

"Quite honestly, his attitude is 'just give me the facts ma'am,' but he makes comments about every case because he enjoys poking fun at the circumstances. In one episode where Knight and Vetter are having a discussion about pets, Reese comes up to them and says 'Catch this perpetrator and I'll buy you both a puppy.'

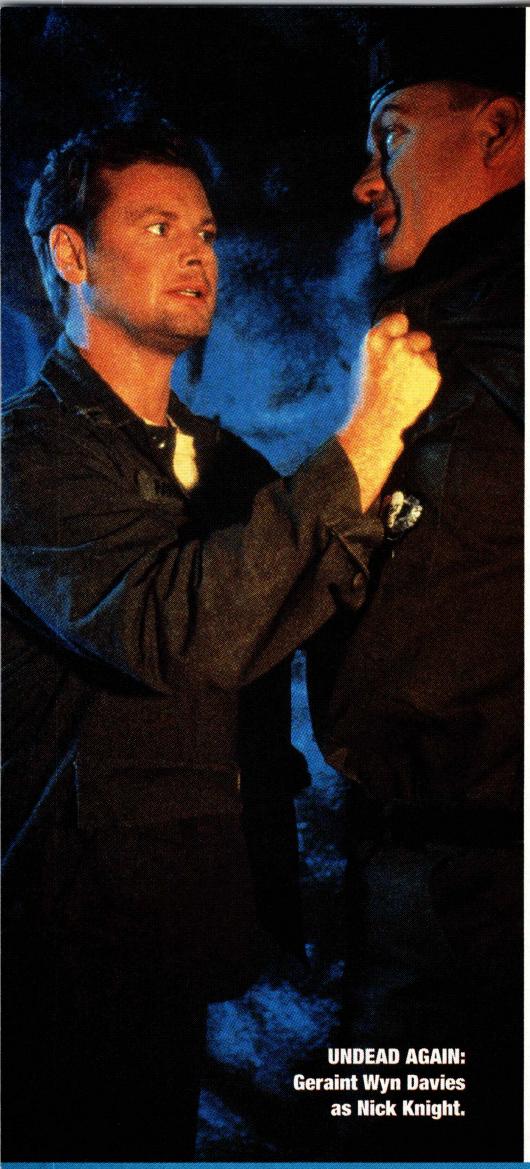
To welcome Mankuma and the other new cast members to the vampire-filled universe of *Forever Knight*, Wyn Davis assumed the directorial reins of the two-hour pilot.

"By observing everything which unfolds during the course of production, I've developed a talent for directing," notes Wyn Davies, who is slated to direct three more episodes. "It has certainly renewed my enthusiasm for the show and it has allowed me to receive an exciting and informative insight into various departments, namely the art department and the wardrobe department—elements which I don't necessarily explore as an actor." 



copyright 1995 Tri Star TV (Ben Mark Holtberg)

EVENING SHADE: Geraint Wyn Davies with Catherine Disher who plays Dr. Natalie Lambert.



UNDEAD AGAIN:
Geraint Wyn Davies
as Nick Knight.

KNIGHT

PHIL BEDARD AND LARRY LALONDE, who have served as *Forever Knight*'s supervising producers since the second season, promise that Knight will come up against some unusual situations this season which, they hope, will keep the show exciting and suspenseful. In *Blind Faith*, for example, Knight fears that a Carouche—a lower form of vampire who feeds on animals—may be responsible for transforming a blind woman's guide dog into a vampire that tears a serial rapist to shreds.

In the *Sons of Belial* episode, written by Bedard and Lalonde, Knight is overtaken by a powerful evil after finding himself in the middle of an exorcism ritual. To rid himself of the evil, the vampire cop must go through an exorcism, replete with the very religious paraphernalia every vampire abhors.

"Because this episode is about the devil and the forces of evil, the storyline is fairly intense and unrelenting," says writer/producer Lalonde. "Instead of featuring scenes of furniture flying around and green puke pouring out of peoples' mouths, we're shooting for a psychological and incredibly disturbing mood piece. For instance, a hostage situation goes terribly wrong when the guy who takes the hostages ends up dead—even though Nick is in control of the situation."

Other episodes written by Lalonde and Bedard include this season's *My Boyfriend Is a Vampire*, which involves a ratings-hungry TV talk show producer; last season's *Stranger Than Fiction*, a story about an author who arrives in town and falls victim to a vampire; and *Near Death*, in which Nick investigates a Flatliner.

"We have to keep the show fresh and surprising because fans would obviously become bored if we were to keep retreading the same ground week after week," Bedard notes. "We do some shows which are very heavy on the action, while shows such as *Curiouser and Curiouser* are just flat-out weird. Obviously we had to shoot this episode on our existing sets, so we thought 'How can we make the story unique, fresh and interesting when everything takes place on the same sets that we've seen time and time again throughout the show?' Well, because the episode's events take place within Nick's head, we made the characters unrecognizable—so we were able to create something different via an alternate reality scenario. Instead of being a medical examiner, Natalie is the captain of the precinct, who is having an affair with Nick. Nick, meanwhile, is caught up in this really bad marriage to Jeannette, while Schanke is still Nick's partner,

KNIGHT STALKER

Nigel Bennett plays the evil dead in *FOREVER KNIGHT*

Besides being the very first vampire to host a weekly radio talk show, LaCroix (who also owns a night club called The Raven) is the vampire community's powerful and seductive master in *Forever Knight*.

Originally a Roman general in Pompeii in 79 A.D., LaCroix is the bloodsucker responsible for transforming Nick Knight into a fellow member of the undead. While Knight is determined to regain his mortality, LaCroix wants him back almost as much as AT&T.

"The character, who is probably the oldest vampire around, has the ultimate power to destroy Nick and anyone else who gets in his way, but because he sees Nick as a son who is going through adolescent rebellion, he chooses to hold back," says Nigel Bennett, the British born actor who portrays LaCroix. "He sees vampirism as a good thing. He's basically trying to persuade Nick that he should be a proud member of the undead. During the first season he tried to

bully Nick into accepting his fate, while in the second season, he tried to reason with Nick. And although he's still committed to bringing Nick back into the vampiric fold, I'm just not sure what his strategy will be during the third season. Only time will tell."

Instead of perceiving the character as the personification of evil who kills victims on a whim, Bennett strongly believes there is a very definite motivation behind LaCroix's bloodsucking bouts.

"In the first episode of the first season, a murderer is draining blood from his victims to make it appear as though the killer is a vampire," says Bennett. "So LaCroix, who's determined to protect the image of Toronto's vampire community, eventually kills the guy."

When it comes to getting into character, Bennett credits fellow Brit Christopher Lee who played the Count in countless Hammer Films, for providing him with crucial inspiration.

"Instead of creating something monstrous, I enhance LaCroix with the same nice, intelligent, refined and cultured manner which Lee gave Dracula," says the actor. "And like Dracula, he enjoys the best things in life—but because he's immortal, he's not impressed by trends, fads and phases."

In the meantime, Bennett, whose favorite vampire movies include Hammer's *Dracula Has Risen From The Grave* and Francis Ford Coppola's *Dracula*, is quick to acknowledge the tremendous fan response which the show has enjoyed.

"Time and time again, people have told me that they discovered *Forever Knight* while flipping from channel to channel. As a result, they become hooked very quickly," says Bennett.

While there are no current plans for a *Forever Knight* feature

WRITERS

**Scripting
FOREVER KNIGHT's
undead adventures**

but he is this really mean guy who is always pushing Nick around. Also, this is a universe where LaCroix has been killed and, as the episode progresses, the clues strongly indicate that Nick is the killer."

By breathing life into alternate realities and countless other scenarios, Lalonde and Bedard constantly strive to keep all stories in good taste (no pun intended).

"We're always on guard against the type of excessive gore and gratuitous violence that offends many people, but, let's face it, when your show is about a homicide cop who's a vampire, you're going to encounter situations involving death and bloodshed," Lalonde points out. "At the same time, that doesn't mean we have to spend our money and energy buying bloodbags and firing bullets into people. Less is more. We let things play inside the audience's mind without actually showing them how grotesque and brutal things can be. As a result, they think they're seeing more than they're actually seeing on screen—so we might shoot someone, but instead of seeing that person get hit, the audience will see the results of that shot. There's very little blood."

Lalonde cites *Bad Blood*, the second season's episode which revolves around a "Jack the Ripper"-type murderer, as an effective

example of this technique.

"We tried to play down that character as much as possible," he points out. "People see the results of his work, but they almost never see the killer himself. By feeling presence within the story, we're creating something considerably more effective and menacing. Take a good look at the first *Alien* movie and you'll notice that the creature is not seen until halfway through the story. Then, when we do see the thing, it's always changing forms, so we spend half the time thinking 'Oh my God what's it going to look like now?'"

For Lalonde and Bedard, one of the show's most invigorating challenges lies in finding an acceptable and steady balance between police drama and vampire fantasy.

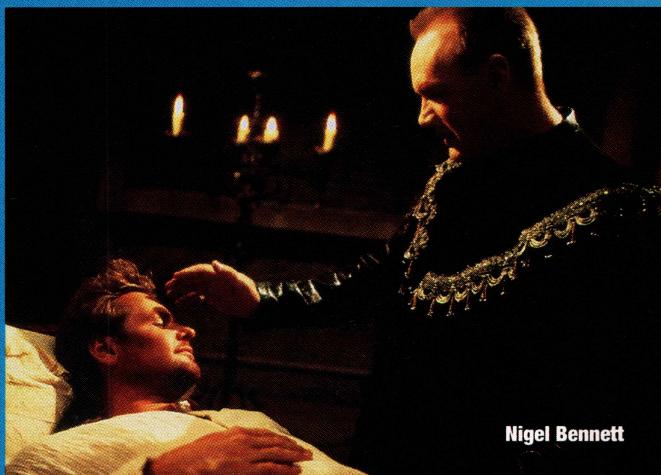
"Obviously, we can't have a cop show without a vampire and we can't have a vampire show without a cop, so we're always straddling the line between those two elements," Lalonde says. "Whenever writers send us story proposals, it's always vampire, vampire, vampire, but we tend to pull back from that because we want to keep the show as reality-based as possible. To reach that goal, we go through a lot of grinding and hard work before we sit back and ask ourselves 'Is this in balance? What's the episode which pre-

ceded it? What episode will come after it?' If we've gone extremely dark and vampire-heavy for two shows in a row, a third dark and vampire-heavy episode may put the show off-balance—so we'll go for a more cop-related story.

"Curiouser and Curiouser is a vampire-heavy show because it explores Nick's mind, so, shortly thereafter we did *The Code*, a pretty clean cop show which featured Schanke more than the other characters."

As for LaCroix and his relationship with Knight, Lalonde says, "They've had a few hundred years together, so they know each other incredibly well. At times they can become almost chummy, so we may explore that angle once or twice—but we're deliberately trying to avoid a 'buddy buddy' relationship. In last season's *Father's Day* episode, you could really see the affection that LaCroix exhibits towards Nick and you do realize that Nick, under the right circumstances will exhibit affection for LaCroix. That's something which is very rare—but once we hit that note and see that affection, we leave it alone for the next six or seven shows. Instead, we focus on the vicious side of their relationship via some good old-fashioned fights."

—Simon Bacal



Nigel Bennett

"Although the show's fans obviously consist of men and women, I personally believe that the show has a bigger female following—simply because *FOREVER KNIGHT* is very erotic and romantic."

film, the Internet has become a viable and effective forum for fans to talk about who they would want to see cast as the various characters in the event that such a movie ever gets made.

"Apparently, they see Anthony Hopkins as LaCroix, Emma Thompson as Natalie and Kenneth Branagh as Nick Knight," says Bennett. "However, if *Forever Knight* ever does become a movie, I'm sure that the television cast will play their respective characters. At the end of the day, that's what the majority of fans would really expect."

"Although the show's fans obviously consist of men and women, I personally believe that the show has a bigger female following—simply because *Forever Knight* is very erotic and romantic," the actor adds. "And let's face reality, romance is largely absent from modern society because people, who are caught up in careers, just don't have time to be romantic anymore. Hopefully, we're offering an effective form of escapism."

As accomplished theatre actor, Bennett, who now lives in Canada, has appeared in such British plays as *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole*, *Ghosts*, *Private Lives* and *Rookery Nook*. Among the movies in his filmography are *Legends of the Fall* and *Narrow Margin* with such television shows as *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, *Street Legal*, *Friday the 13th: The Series*, *The New Twilight Zone* and *Reilly: Ace of Spies*.

"I love England, but the British film industry is practically nonexistent, even though there's a tremendous pool of incredibly talented actors," says Bennett.

At the same time, the thought of moving to Hollywood and hustling to get work is just too exhausting for him. "That's something which just doesn't interest me," he laughs.

—Simon Bacal



STAYING

Parlaying his recent comeback (including the double box office home runs of *Pulp Fiction* and *Get Shorty*), former Sweathog John Travolta is segueing into his first producing gig next summer.

The project is L. Ron Hubbard's best-selling science fiction book *Battlefield Earth* which is being set up at MGM/UA as a big-budget project with Travolta also starring.

"I'm going to take responsibility for my career beyond my little sphere of influence as an actor," notes Travolta, a member of Hubbard's Church of Scientology.

"The story is set in the future and it's about this planet that's been in bad shape for a couple thousand of years," says Travolta. "It's about this guy's adventure of finding out what happened to this planet beyond his town which he hasn't ever left. It has some interesting sci-fi characters, so it's going to be very, very cool. Actually it's one of the most popular sci-fi books every written. MGM is very excited about doing it and so am I."

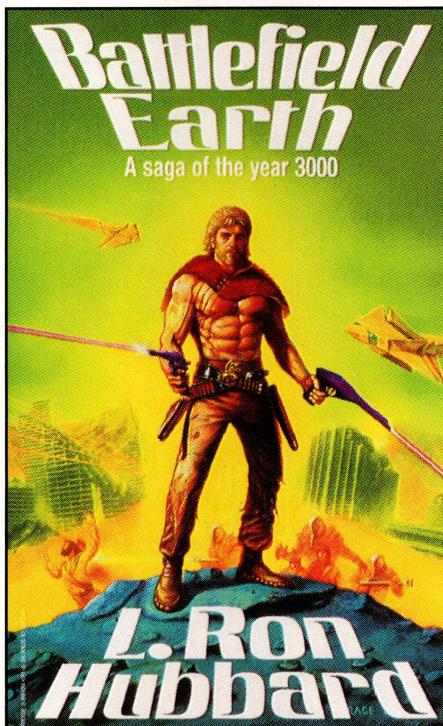
As he sheds his gangster image momentarily, Travolta continues to accept a wide range of intriguing projects in different genres as well, including fantasy and action.

He recently wrapped a "*Forrest Gump*-like fantasy" entitled *Phenomenon* which he is especially excited about.

"It's about a guy who has an average or below average intelligence who gets struck by a stroke of genius and through this genius he helps people," says Travolta. "Ultimately it turns out it could have been a UFO strike or some sort of illness. You don't know really what it is and it's up to you to interpret it."

Also on the horizon is Travolta's first major action film role, portraying the heavy in famed Hong Kong action director John Woo's *Broken Arrow*.

"I'm hoping it's going to be one of



WOO ARE YOU? John Travolta with *Broken Arrow* director John Woo. Travolta plans to segue into producing with his first sci-fi project, L. Ron Hubbard's *Battlefield Earth*, for MGM/UA next spring.

the best action movies ever made, and not for selfish reasons," says Travolta. "I think John Woo is one of the kindest and most considerate people I've ever met, and he deserves success with the movie. I would do anything for him. He's very gracious to you as an actor."

While Quentin Tarantino can certainly receive some of the credit for reviving Travolta's career, the actor notes that his director pal has also been drawing attention to his underrated oeuvre, including the exceptional Brian De Palma thriller *Blow Out*.

"I think Tarantino has set out to make every movie I ever made known, without overlooking a thing," says Travolta. "I was probably as excited about doing *Blow Out* then as I am about doing *Phenomenon* now. At the time, it seemed like a great departure and something wonderful and new for me. I played a bright guy who had an interesting past—and who was old enough to have a past. I thought the script was very clever. And knowing Brian as a very cinematic director, I knew, at a minimum, it would be a very interesting movie."

Adds Travolta of De Palma, "I love Brian. There are a certain handful of people who were passionate about me as a talent and Brian was one of them. He discovered De Niro and he discovered me—and I always felt like I was part of a special group of people he discovered that turned out to have pretty decent careers."

Still, isn't there just a small chance he might reprise his memorable turns as Vincent Vega from *Pulp Fiction* or Chili Palmer from *Get Shorty* any time soon?

"I'm of the mind now of starting, doing and finishing a character and saying goodbye to it," says Travolta. "I'm not always so intrigued by sequels. I did a sequel to *Saturday Night Fever* and I did two sequels to *Look Who's Talking*. What I learned from all that is that you do it well once, and then just let it go."

*A superstar again,
John Travolta looks
towards the
future...literally.*

by A.C. Ferrante

ALIVE

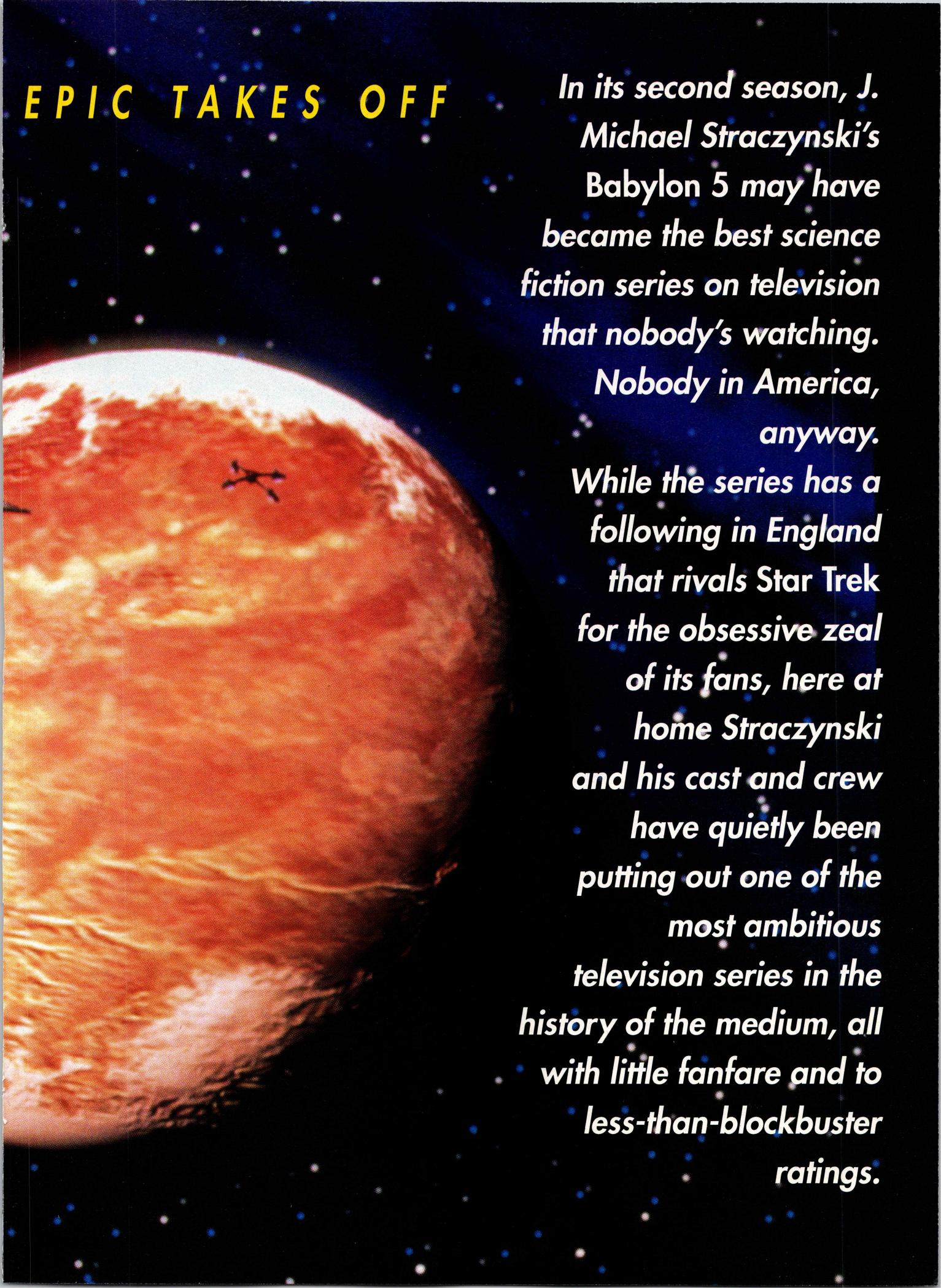
SCIENCE FICTION'S FIVE-YEAR



**INSIDE
BABYLON
5**

by kevin stevens

EPIC TAKES OFF



In its second season, J. Michael Straczynski's Babylon 5 may have became the best science fiction series on television that nobody's watching. Nobody in America, anyway.

While the series has a following in England that rivals Star Trek for the obsessive zeal of its fans, here at home Straczynski and his cast and crew have quietly been putting out one of the most ambitious television series in the history of the medium, all with little fanfare and to less-than-blockbuster ratings.



A TREE GROWS IN BABYLON: G'KAR'S DREAM IS REALIZED BY CRAFTSMEN ON THE SERIES' EXPANSIVE SETS FOR THE THIRD SEASON EPISODE, "DUST TO DUST". **RIGHT:** THE ORIGINAL PRODUCTION ILLUSTRATION BY SERIES PRODUCTION DESIGNER JOHN IACOVELLI.

Copyright 1995 Warner Brothers Domestic Television



The setting from which *Babylon 5* derives its title is a space station in the distant fringes of space, originally conceived to be an interstellar United Nations where feuding alien races could bridge their differences. Inhabited by both humans and aliens, the station served as the crucible of galactic affairs. However, the series has evolved from following the simple politicking aboard Babylon 5 to exploring a canvas redolent of *Lord of the Rings* grand fantasy, in which an ancient evil must be confronted by our band of heroes who face enemies from within and without.

In fact, many complained during the show's first year that characters were one-dimensional and the storyline had little emotional resonance. It was all setup with little payoff. If those viewers had checked in on *Babylon 5*'s second season, they would have seen Straczynski's storyline begin to focus itself around the dynamic personality of Bruce Boxleitner's Captain John Sheridan while other characters, like Commander Susan Ivanova, displayed new depths of emotional intensity. They would have watched as Straczynski revealed mysteries (such as the true nature of Vorlon Ambassador Kosh) and masterfully put two characters (the alien ambassadors G'Kar and Londo Mollari) through a total character transformation in which the two have virtually exchanged places. And finally, G'kar's Narn has gone from a bellicose, war-mongering race to an oppressed civilization under the brutal totalitarian sway of Londo's Centauri invaders.

It's all part of Straczynski's ambitious application of literary traditions to American television. *Babylon 5* is a novel for television,

according to Straczynski, and as with the best novels, they may begin slowly, but they quickly build with a collective power that can only be experienced after a lengthy set-up.

"There was a story in the *New York Times* a few days ago about this wonderfully innovative idea of telling one story over a lengthy period of time," notes Straczynski. "They had *ER* and *Murder One* and so on and so on, but no mention of *Babylon 5*. And we're not just telling one story over one season, we're doing it over five."

Straczynski's oft-stated goal of producing five seasons of *Babylon 5* with a clearly-defined beginning, middle and ending is moving to its mid-point, as the series is now part-way through a third season. For Straczynski to complete his goal, more viewers need to discover the rewards of sticking with his complex storyline.

At this midpoint, Straczynski plans to unveil another plot twist, perhaps the most far-reaching of all. "After episode ten [of this season] the very structure of the show, right down to the component molecules, has been changed.

"It's a whole different series after that," he promises. "It's a systemic change to the show. One thing this show is not afraid of is change. I like the fact that the faces and names in the cast change in the main titles. People come, people go, people live, people die. I like the fact that we change the theme every year, because these are all separate books to me in the five-book series of *Babylon 5*."

For the third season, Straczynski describes his theme centering on ramifications of events in the earlier two seasons.

"let's be outrageous and compare Joe [Straczynski] to Shakespeare, in that he takes universal themes and ideas like GOD, JEALOUSY, HATRED, BELIEF, and DOUBT and sets them all in a timeless kind of place."

—Jason Carter



ANGEL HEART: In "Fall of Night" Ambassador Kosh is finally revealed...or is he?

He's titled it after one of the third-season episodes, "Point of No Return."

"Some elements of it are more action-oriented," he says, "but primarily this season can be almost subtitled 'consequences.' In the third season now all the birds come home to roost. The assassination plot, which we've been playing with for two years comes to a head when we find out that, indeed, Santiago was assassinated under the orders of President Clark. And once you do that, once this leaks out and there's evidence provided back home that Clark did indeed assassinate Santiago, there are going to have to be results and ramifications. We basically have a Gatling gun. Many triggers are being pulled."

Much of the second season was used to explore the descent of the character of Londo, the Centauri ambassador, into darkness as well as to examine the parallel story of Ambassador G'Kar's more tragic transformation.

"What's wonderful about it is that you have those who look at Londo, even when he's now nominally the bad guy, and feel compassion for him. And those who look at G'Kar and say, 'Well he's having a hard time right now, yeah, but he deserves it because he tried to do bad stuff in the past.' You are never one color on this show."

"There are two fundamental questions in the show that are asked repeatedly. One is, 'What do you want?' The second one is, 'Who are you?' And one of the key thematic elements in this show is that the order in which you answer those questions can destroy you or illuminate you," says Straczynski.

"If you answer 'What do you want?' before you know who you are, the answer will destroy you because you aren't sophisticated enough or mature enough to know logically and reasonably what it is you should want."

Straczynski points to Londo's character as one who has gone this road.

"To answer 'Who are you?' first and know what you are, what your wants and needs really are, then you can respond to 'What do you want?' and give an answer that makes sense. The Shadows are there to ask the questions in the wrong order. The Vorlons are there to ask the questions in the right order. Those kind of philosophical underpinnings to me are what make the show interesting."

Straczynski looks to the second-season *Comes the Inquisitor* as Minbari

THE MAN WITH THE PLAN

HIS NAME IS J. MICHAEL STRACZYNSKI AND FOR HIM, *BABYLON 5*, LIKE THE FICTIONAL cosmic ensemble of the show, is the realization of a long-cherished dream. A longtime science fiction fan whose tenure in the genre has included a long stint hosting the popular L.A. sci-fi radio call-in show *Hour 25*, Straczynski has also held writing and producing gigs on *The New Twilight Zone*, *Murder, She Wrote* and *Captain Power*, as well as penning an unproduced *V* miniseries revival for Warner Bros. Straczynski's most personal effort yet, though, is *Babylon 5*, a venture which has only made it to the screen due to his considerable tenacity and through no lack of blood, sweat and tears.

Cut in the mold of Gene Roddenberry, a writer/producer with a distinct hands-on approach, Straczynski is loved by many and loathed by others. He has managed to put a definite personal imprimatur on the series which, like the original *Star Trek* (a show which Straczynski greatly admires), has struggled in the ratings over its first two years on the air. Now, as always, the question is: Will Straczynski get to finish telling the five-year saga he has toiled on for so long?

So what, in fact, is *Babylon 5*'s biggest obstacle to ratings success? That it's science fiction? That it's syndicated? Is it the endless re-run schedules that are off-putting to the audience, or is its narrative structure simply too demanding?

"We're an out-house show," points out Straczynski. "*Kung Fu* and other programs that are being made are in-house (Warner Bros.) productions. We are really the only out-of-studio production, the only show where you see two credits—Babylonian Productions and Warners. And so we're sort of the ugly stepchild."

"I know that there have been a number of people at Warners who would have been quite pleased had we gone by the wayside. And some even tried to encourage that process a little bit here and there because they just didn't like the fact that we were here," he says. "So it's been a number of factors, political and economic, and folks just not understanding what our show is."

For evidence of this, Straczynski points to the Warner Bros. promotional spots for the episodes. "If you look at them, the promos are always action, special effects and everything else and none of the character stuff. They figure, well the audience wants action. This show is more than that and some of them don't perceive that. Some of them do. Greg Maday, who's our executive liaison at Warners does understand what we're doing here. And he's been very helpful to us but some others haven't got a clue."

Doesn't Warner Bros. understand that, if properly nurtured, *Babylon 5* could become a franchise property on the order of Paramount's *Star Trek* or Fox's *The X-Files*? "I don't think so," says Straczynski. "And there's good and bad in that. The bad is obvious, in that we don't get the publicity, the support, the advertising that the show requires and that it merits and consequently a lot of folks don't know we're here."

"The good part of it is the value of not being seen by the studio executives. I think if they were more aware of us as a franchise possibility, they might start massaging, they might be a little more guarded about what they let us do. And it might bend the show into something it wasn't supposed to be. I'd see a memo coming down the pike that says, 'Put a kid in it. We'd like that demographic in there for our advertisers.' That's why they haven't done that to us—because we're kind of not noticeable. It's like the dragon in the cave. Your best chance of getting the gold and getting out alive is to go in when it isn't noticing you. So it's a mixed blessing."

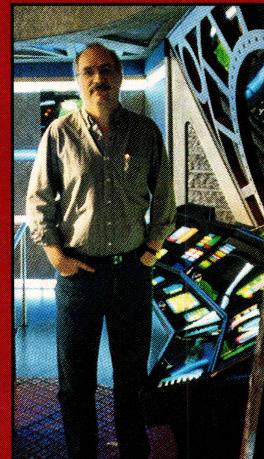
As for Straczynski's own personal motivations for shouldering the burden of bringing *Babylon 5* to the air despite the hard-fought battles to get it—and keep it—in production, he says, "I guess the goal in some ways is about being remembered. In my family, Straczynski is not a name that is noted much or valued much. Very few have ever gone to college and made anything out of themselves. Some distant relatives have, but only out of my peripheral vision. My grandfather was a drunk and died in the street, literally, buried in a pauper's grave."

"As a kid that scared the hell out of me. It was as if the wind took away his name and took away everything that he was and there was nothing left to mark his passing. I said, 'I can't go that way. I can't let that happen to me. I have to leave footprints somewhere.' So to a large degree, these are my footprints I'm leaving in the sand, hoping they won't be washed away too quickly."

In television, being washed away equates to getting cancelled with no chances of future re-runs. *Babylon 5* won't have to worry about this, as Turner Network Television (TNT) has announced a deal in which they'll be re-running episodes of *Babylon 5*, beginning from the pilot episode. Fans who missed the opening acts of the five-chapter storyline, can therefore get caught up and *Babylon 5* will have another chance to catch on.

Meanwhile, J. Michael Straczynski will just continue to tell the story he's always wanted to tell.

—Kevin Stevens



J. Michael
Straczynski's
vision
propels the
BABYLON 5
action

ambassador Delenn's grappling with these questions.

This year, more was revealed about the mysterious Vorlon Ambassador Kosh, while at the same time the equally mysterious Shadows were moving into conflict with Sheridan and his crew.

"They're not just two sides of the same coin—they are the same coin," says Straczynski. "These philosophical issues are not something American television is all that used to exploring." But Straczynski believes that if placed in a dramatic context, it's possible to tell stories with philosophical and psychological subtext.

"But you can't make it too much on-the-nose, because then it becomes artificially enforced and you bend things to make that work," he adds. "In general, things will mean more as the show goes along."

The themes Straczynski is working with are so large and his ambition in telling the story so great that he's moving to the point of practically doing it all himself, without the aid of outside writers. While he wrote 15 of last season's 22 scripts, Straczynski wants to write all of this season's. "I don't think that's ever been done before," he says. "But if I can get



BRUCE BOXLEITNER'S CAPTAIN SHERIDAN AND CLAUDIA CHRISTIAN'S IVANOVA IN BABYLON 5'S OBSERVATION DOME.

this story done, I think that I will to some degree have changed how science fiction television's done and I will have created something quite extraordinary. I think I already have to some extent. But it ain't there yet."

Straczynski's scripts are sometimes criticized for being a little too philosophical, perhaps even preachy. It's something the writer himself recognizes. "Speechifying. Yeah, I'm trying to cut back on the monologues a little bit. I love monologues, but I was trying to say too much at one time. Let's parcel this out a little more reasonably. So I try to spend more time now on character moments in the scripts."

And while the scope of *Babylon 5*'s storyline is one of its chief attractions, for the actors on the show the renewed emphasis on character is a welcome change.

"We have a bigger cast than most networks' entire prime time schedules," jokes Jerry Doyle, the former Wall Street investment banker-turned-actor who plays Security Chief Michael Garibaldi.

"I told Joe last year I thought my storyline was pretty weak," says Doyle. "I feel like I'm giving out parking tickets. It's frustrating as an actor because you want to work. Not that every show should be about me—because it is an ensemble cast—but you know when there

SPOTLIGHT

BRUCE B

B5's Sheridan is a

With the addition of Bruce Boxleitner as Captain John Sheridan, series creator J. Michael Straczynski has found a central hero dynamic enough to excite the series' regular audience, to draw in new viewers for the show and to generate renewed media attention to the oft-struggling *Babylon 5*.

But apart from ratings and publicity, Boxleitner's Sheridan has given *Babylon 5* something much more important—a personal focal point for the dramatic plot advances of the series' second season.

"I think Sheridan helped Joe [Straczynski] focus on a more personal level on this big universe that he has painted and he's brought it all down to a personal story," says Boxleitner.

The actor has so thoroughly and successfully defined this role that the readers of *Sci-Fi UNIVERSE* voted Bruce Boxleitner best actor in a genre television series for 1995.

But even more than his heroic qualities, Boxleitner is drawn to Sheridan's less-than-stellar characteristics. "What I like about the characters on this series is that I love the flaws that are being exposed. And you're going to find many more in Sheridan."

Boxleitner suspects that anyone who would choose to be posted to Straczynski's fictional space station would have to be "pretty dysfunctional to begin with."

"They're like pioneers, all alone in the night," he says. "I really believe our pioneer forefathers were a pretty paranoid group of individuals. You'd have to be. You'd be way out on a frontier all by yourselves having to make a go of it. We're way, far away in this big tin can, and it requires a certain human being that can take that loneliness. Each one of these characters is a very lonely individual. No one has a successful love life. No one really has family ties. Any ties to family are really strange ones."

Boxleitner reveals that one of these family relationships will be explored when Sheridan's father is introduced in a third-season episode. "His father's a diplomat who is now a farmer, a gentleman farmer up in some part of the States, and you're going to find out things about Sheridan through that relationship."

"But Sheridan's ties are really to his duties. I think the service has been his life and that causes him sometimes to be a little—there's a certain arrogance sometimes. He likes to pontificate. I mean, early on, Joe had me doing speeches from Abraham Lincoln."

Boxleitner sees the stress of his fictional alter-ego seeping through in some perhaps-destructive ways. "I think he could find solace in drinking alone sometimes," suggests Boxleitner. "Garibaldi already does have an alcohol problem. He never touches it now, but if you've ever seen Sheridan drink—I chug it back. I went through most of a bottle of space vodka in one scene, but I think that comes from the loneliness."

"I think he's a bit quick-tempered and is probably a little too impulsive in his decisions when cool and calmness should have prevailed. But the diplomatic role is not suited to Sheridan. He's not Jean-Luc Picard."

One of the character's most personal wounds was re-opened this season when Sheridan learned that his wife's fate may be tied to the Shadows, with whom he is now at war. Says Boxleitner, "I think that revenge may be a motive in much of what he's doing here."

This will culminate in the third season, when Sheridan pursues the truth about his wife to the Shadow world of Za'ha'dum. "It may be our first big exterior," he says. "We're going to go to that planet and we're gonna settle that

OXLEITNER

Captain Kirk for the '90s

score. We'll find out more about what happened. There's going to be some closure there for Sheridan."

Boxleitner has defined Sheridan as a man searching for his faith. "The thing that I want to work on personally, as an actor, is this loss of faith which is slowly peeling back for Sheridan. When all that is gone, there's going to be a new guy left standing there who's gonna have to rebuild."

Boxleitner spends lots of time talking with series creator J. Michael Straczynski about Sheridan and his place in the *Babylon 5* universe. One of the central metaphors in Straczynski's story, Boxleitner's discovered, is the Arthurian legend.

"Joe loves mythology and I do too," Boxleitner says. "I've always been fascinated by these legendary characters and you can see in many ways this story is the Arthurian tale. Something is about to happen this season and at the end, we're going to have to rebuild Camelot."

Extending the metaphor, Boxleitner sees Sheridan as Arthur, Kosh as Merlin and, "I think Delenn's going to be sort of the Guinevere of this thing. We'll see them come closer and closer together. Where that's going to end up, I don't know."

While Sheridan's relationship with Delenn has been only intimated thus far, it's the connection with Kosh that was most important in the second season.

Says Boxleitner, "Sheridan had no spirituality whatsoever. That's what Kosh is providing for him. It's been a fascinating journey with Kosh. He takes me ahead and then he leads me on and then confuses me, stops me cold with one of his totally incredible sayings that make no sense. It's very much the Merlin and young Arthur relationship. Where it will lead, I have no idea. Joe has said from the very beginning that everyone isn't who they seem. He likes to take characters and then turn them right over on their heads to become their total opposite."

Boxleitner talks enthusiastically about Sheridan's future, but he's sanguine enough to know that the end might well never be resolved. "I really want to see Joe finish what he has to say with all of us," says Boxleitner. "This last season we were scared to death because we really didn't think we were gonna get picked up and it had to do with the shakiness of the PTEN network. But if something happens next year, I hope that Warner Bros. moves us to the WB network. I think they really are realizing what they've got with this show."

"There's even been some talk of a film, between the fourth and fifth seasons. It may happen and it might not. We've always been kind of the little underdog, but we've all decided to wear it as a badge of honor."

—Kevin Stevens



LARGE AND IN CHARGE: Bruce Boxleitner took command in *B5*'s second season as Captain John Sheridan.

were three or four episodes in a row last year where I'd work only two days out of seven, I got nothing going on."

This situation contributed to Andrea Thompson (Doyle's wife, who played telepath Talia Winters) deciding to leave the show. "She was off for three months straight and she didn't have a schedule," explains Doyle. "She'd ask, 'What am I doing, where am I going?' They'd say, 'Well, you're just not in the next episode, you're not in the next episode, you're not in the next episode.' And when you sit around for two or three months as an actor, that doesn't cut it. You want to work."

There's no rancor in Doyle's arguments and, in fact, he recognizes that the show's unique structure aids his performance because if he's not around much in a particular episode, he doesn't have to read the script.

"I don't look at it because I want to focus on playing the process as opposed to the result," he says. "Not knowing where my character's going, for me, is exciting as opposed to if I knew that at the end of the fifth year such-and-such was gonna happen. You

could almost fall into the trap of playing to that result."

Babylon 5 has eleven regular characters, as well as one character, Kosh, who's essentially a suit worn by actor Bruce Boxleitner's stand-in. Sometimes Kosh gets more screen time than the actors whose faces you see in the main titles. It's frustrating, but the actors take it in stride, because it's all part of the intricacy of Straczynski's overall narrative.

"It is a big cast," notes Claudia Christian who plays Commander Susan Ivanova. "But when Joe does give me something to do, it's very fulfilling. You can't satisfy everybody, period. You know, the first season I was just becoming established and they didn't really know me. Now that they've seen that I have a larger range than perhaps they'd anticipated, they've been giving me more to do. But the storyline doesn't revolve around me."

Mira Furlan, who portrays Ambassador Delenn, agrees. "It's a big cast and it's a bunch of characters that you have to follow," she says. "It's not always easy to fol-

low everyone in a real way and in a full way. But I missed action last year and I would love if that doesn't happen this year."

Two of the characters Straczynski focused on in the second season were alien Ambassadors G'Kar and Londo, as each was involved in an elaborate story arc that had audience sympathy shift slowly from one character towards the other. As Londo sided definitely with the Shadows, G'Kar suffered the consequences of Londo's ambition. So compelling was this storyline that Andreas Katsulas' performance as G'Kar this year earned him *Sci-Fi UNIVERSE*'s Readers' Choice Award for best supporting actor in a genre television series.

"I knew what the arc for the character was going to be," says actor Peter Jurasik. "I think Joe put it that Londo goes from comedic to light, light to dark, dark to tragic. He knew from the beginning how he wanted the character to arc. I encouraged him that the more comedic we could make Londo at the start, the more it will contrast with dark. So the arc this past season has shocked a lot of people."

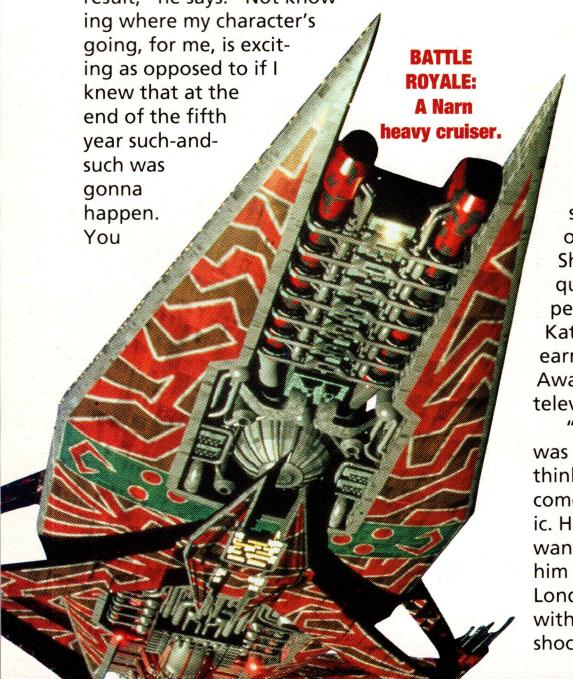
"Sid on *Hill Street Blues* had the same stuff in it," says Jurasik of the snitch he essayed on the popular Steven Bochco police drama. "He was comedic. He was light, but he could turn dark. He was flawed the way Londo is. Those are a lot more interesting characters to play than playing excellent people who do excellent things all their life—heroes with a capital 'H.'"

Andreas Katsulas points to the story arc as helping him to define G'Kar's character further. In the first season of the show, says Katsulas, he focused on establishing G'Kar's physical presence. "There is no fiddling around with the fact that I've got on a super-duper make-up job that gives me a great deal to work with," says Katsulas. "It immediately demands a physical presence to be comfortable in it—already you're given a certain posture, etc. But the trap that is lying in wait is letting the make-up do the acting work for you. In the first season, I was in a superficial sense, trying to find out how he moved, how he stood. On a surface level, I needed to discover the parameters."

"The insides began to fill out in the second season," he adds. "The depths of his passion for his people, his tenderness. What was more one-dimensional the first season, took on two-dimensions [in the second]. Joe writes the possibility of an emotion into the scenes, then, because I grab hold of that and work that, I think Joe sees it, and says, 'I can give him more of that.'"

The end result for Katsulas is rewarding. "I started to show something of the inner life of the character," he admits. "My goal now is to keep all that going, but with a new intention, to add to the character not only a physical expression or an emotional expression, but to really explore what the character's thinking. I don't know if I'm going to find it, but it's my goal."

For new cast member Jason Carter, who plays Ranger Marcus Cole, joining the cast of *Babylon 5* has been a surprising experience. "There is no star behavior, as much as people may be stars. Very rarely do you hear a raised voice on the set because everybody's



BABYLON 5

IN THE LIFE

From Concept to Completion

DAY MINUS 21: The script is finalized and distributed to all cast and crew.

DAY MINUS 14: The episode goes into serious pre-production, with

meetings on visual effects, wardrobe, CGI and so on. Props are designed and construction begun on both props and wardrobe and any sets that are specific to that episode.

DAY MINUS 10: Tone meeting with director and producers to make sure all parties see the story the same way. Casting, begun on Day Minus 14, is finalized.

DAY MINUS 6: Major production meeting with all departments, at which each scene is analyzed in detail, examining and reinforcing what props, costumes, extras and lighting requirements are needed for each scene.

DAY ONE: Filming begins.

DAY SEVEN: Filming finishes. Editing, which has been going on since day two as dailies arrive at the studio with editors making rough assemblies of the scenes as they come in, continues.

DAY EIGHT/NINE: The director works with the editor to make



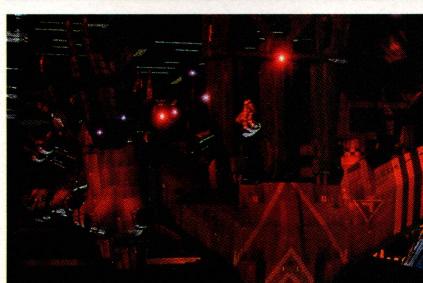
working for the same end. There's never any shouting going on that I've heard, never any of those tensions, or those little conversations—people bitching about other people. It doesn't seem to happen here. It's like everybody's doing the same thing," he says.

"We have a really good group of people," agrees actor Bill Mumy, the *Lost In Space* veteran who portrays Delenn's Minbari aide Lennier on *Babylon 5*. "It's not like we walk back and watch Bruce get into some fabulous Winnebago and the rest of us crawl into some hole in the wall. We all have the same dressing rooms, we all have the same stuff in 'em. We all park in the same lot. We all eat the same food. And I'll tell you that makes a big difference. We're treated equally here and we're treated very comfortably. It's nice."

Carter attributes the camaraderie and relaxed atmosphere on the *Babylon 5* set to the leadership of J. Michael Straczynski and producer John Copeland. But Carter also believes that the cast and crew are united because of their faith in the stories they're all telling. "Let's be outrageous and compare Joe to Shakespeare in the respect that he takes universal themes and ideas like God, jealousy, hatred, belief, and doubt and sets them all in a timeless kind of place, right down to the costumes," offers Carter. "It's not a futuristic thing. The fact that on *Babylon 5* you talk about bacon and eggs, you talk about the ball game. There's all of that in there. All of that philosophical debate, too. It's universally applicable. It's not just a lot of spaceships shooting the other spaceships out. It engages the intellect."

"I'm very grateful to be working on this show because of its seemingly flippant and irreverent attitude towards certain taboo subjects," says Claudia Christian. "I find a lot of television shows really pushing that P.C. crap down everybody's throats and it's taken away individuality in their life and freedom of speech. The art of debate is virtually extinct. I think it's just that he's just got a lot of balls and he doesn't really care."

Christian points to her character's second-season storyline with Talia Winters as evidence of the series' pushing the traditional television envelope. "It's just saying that in the future we still have the same problems



FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: Sheridan is rescued by Kosh in "Fall of Night," a Babylon 5 Star Fury, a launching of the Star Furies, and a Minbari Cruiser under attack. The special visual effects were realized by Foundation Imaging.

and we still have the same ambitions and we still have the same sexualities and the same arguments about religion and politics and everything else," says Christian.

Others in the cast are excited by Straczynski's mid-point dramatic turning point in the tenth episode of season three, *Severed Dreams*.

"We're at a point right now where we're just about halfway through the novel, through the tale, and we're reaching a wonderful, major shift of gears. It's like a big musical cue here," says Mumy. "Everything's changing and I love that about the show."

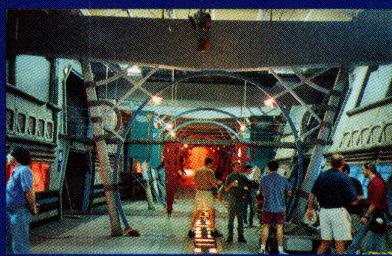
Adds Mumy, "Hey, I loved doing *Lost in Space* but it was basically Smith's gonna get Will and the Robot into trouble and they're gonna go off and eventually Will's gonna figure out how to save their butts and everybody stands around and laughs at the end every week. And to some degree, it wasn't as campy, but *Star Trek* was the same thing, you know? We're gonna go to another planet and Kirk's gonna make out with somebody and someone's gonna get shot with a phaser and they beam up and they have a cute scene on the bridge at the end."

Babylon 5, Mumy points out, is not episodic and that may be the reason American audiences haven't embraced the series in massive numbers. It requires commitment to the storyline—an ambitious viewer for an ambitious series—not only in terms of watching the series for five years, but in applying skills best used when reading a novel, skills that are rarely necessary when watching television.

Says Straczynski, "My problem is, I tend not to worry too much about the audience, in the sense that I don't want to adjust things just to get new viewers," he says. "That way lies madness—and cute robots. All I can do is tell the story the way I think it has to be told. Mark Twain said that's the key. If you find a story of interest to you, since we all share certain commonalities, the odds are that at least ten other guys will like the same story."

"So I'm banking on it. If I'm right, the story will live on. If I'm wrong, the story will die."

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE



the first Director's Cut of the episode.

DAY TEN/ELEVEN:

Producers begin making their cuts and sit with the editor to view each scene, picking out various takes and angles and integrating CGI. Sometimes the cut varies

a lot from the Director's Cut and is a whole new version. Producer's Cut is finished around Day Twelve/Thirteen.

DAY 15: Producer's Cut is sent to primary editing bay for on-line editing at which time the frames of actual film are slugged and prepared for actual physical editing (all proceeding editing work has been done on AVID, a computer editing system).

DAY 20: Episode is color-timed to make sure color values are correct.

DAY 25 : Spotting session in which producers, sound designer, composer and dialogue editors meet and review the on-line edit or CTM (color timed master) to determine where sound and music

should be placed, the kind of sound or music required and number of frames/seconds duration. Second spotting session with visual EFX supervisor to determine rotoscoping or other non-CGI EFX placement.

DAY 39: Final mix-down of all elements: music, sound, looping, visual effects and other elements. "For this we sit in the mixing bay from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. nonstop, bringing in lunch, to determine balance of sound to music, music to dialogue, which elements to use or lose, and so on," says Straczynski.

DAY 46: Finished episode delivered to PTEN and in-house.

Total time required: 67 days. "And during this period, we are simultaneously editing at least 4-5 other shows, and have shot roughly another six episodes, which are also in various stages of editing," comments Straczynski. "The details of the budget per episode are classified...but you could easily take *Deep Space Nine*'s budget, cut it in half, and you'd still have more than we've got."



Babylon 5 has one of the most distinctive visual styles in TV, something the television community recognized this year with John C. Flinn III's Emmy nomination for Best Cinematography for the episode *The Geometry of Shadows*.

At the center of the hub of people who create the physical look of the series is producer John Copeland. "Everything has to integrate," he says. "You can have really great visual effects, but if they're not part of the weave of a good story, they're just great visual effects and that's not what resonates with viewers. We've tried to make everything work towards telling the story—the way that we're moving the camera, the way that we're approaching our lighting and using filters and diffusion. It's all part of the storytelling process."

Each season of the series, in addition to having a distinctive theme (last season it was "The Coming of Shadows"), also has a distinctive visual style. In season two, Copeland notes, the visual tone went dark. "All of a sudden, things went from the more brightly-colored to darker and more serious and more severe. That's all part of the story that Joe's mapping out. We're trying to support it with a kind of visual trick in every area."

For the series' third season, Copeland and his team are adding even more to their bag of tricks. "Until this season, we have relied probably 99 percent of the time on digital effects," says Copeland. "There are some things that we need to create for this season, however, that simply are not best done with those types of visuals. So, we're going to be combining some more realistic elements, not necessarily miniatures, but things that we shoot ourselves to add to our computer-generated

is going to be a pretty spectacular new set."

Called the Strategic War Room, it'll be a place for Sheridan and his crew to plan their war against the Shadows.

In addition, Dr. Franklin gets a new workshop. "It's a new set. Iso-Lab is different than our old Med-Lab, in that you can walk all the way around it. It's bigger. There were certain elements of the other set that were problematic to shoot. We had some platforms in there that prevented you from moving from one side of the set to another. So we kind of reconfigured that and have done a different thing with Franklin's desk area," says Copeland.

The new set actually adjoins the infirmary, allowing the producers to tie different environments together which lends more reality to the illusion of *Babylon 5*.

Factor in the new White Star sets, and the production now has 85 standing sets available. "One of the problems that we're dealing with this season is we're starting to run out of storage space."

Copeland notes that while the number of sets has increased, "the budgets haven't. We didn't get a very large increase this year."

The high point for Copeland in season two was its final episode, *The Fall of Night*. "I think in that episode we found the physical envelope of what we can do and can't do," says Copeland. "There are twice as many effect shots in that single one-hour episode as there was in the two-hour pilot."

But the growth of the series' visual style only begins with its visual effects, believes Copeland. "We're trying to impart emo-

COPING WITH THE COSMOS

Producer John Copeland on creating a science fiction television classic

effects to give a more concrete sense of place or environment."

These more realistic elements include the creation of dynamic, chaotic systems that are difficult to render realistically on the computer. Says Copeland, "Instead of having computer-generated explosions, we shoot our own explosions. We're shooting our own clouds for some shots that take place in an upper-atmosphere environment.

"Being able to add those elements into the mix is consistent with the way that we've always approached *Babylon 5* because what we've always done is use the tools that will accomplish our goal, whatever they are. Also, in adding these different elements of reality into what we're doing, we play as close to the physics of our universe as possible."

As with the first season, the producers conducted a "post-mortem" meeting at the conclusion of the second season to look for areas of the show that could be improved.

"This year, we've brought out a great dedicated graphic artist for signage and other types of detail for all of our sets on the station," says Copeland. "We've got a lot of propaganda posters that are going up and he's done all those."

"There's a lot more little detail that's gone into the existing sets," says Copeland, "as well as the addition of new sets. This season there is a set that will come into being in the middle of the season that takes the place of the Council Chamber. As a result of the war, everybody's personal agendas are going to become more important to them than trying to do something in concert. The alliances are all starting to crack and crumble. This

tion through the camera, and I think that we're getting better at it. That was something that we worked at last year with [Director of Photography] John Flinn. We wanted to free up the camera to move along with our directors. We encouraged them to be visual in telling a story with the camera and I think they all pretty much rose to that challenge."

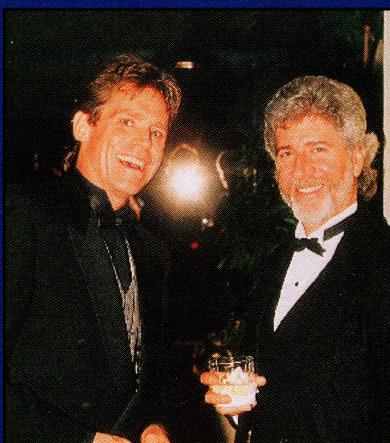
While director Janet Greek will be leaving the show to pursue a writing career, other directors in the regular *B5* rotation such as Mike Vejar, Jim Johnston, Jesus Trevino and David Eagle will be back for the third season, as well as DP John C. Flinn III who helmed an episode last season. A new face to the *B5* cast and crew is Adam Nimoy, who directed the third season's fifth episode, and is a veteran of several science fiction shows including *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and *The Outer Limits*.

"I think one of the big things that we've done this year is we've gone to a new film stock," says Copeland. "It's allowing us to not put quite as much fill light on our set, on backgrounds, and yet objects of color, like a poster or illuminated sign, just loom out from that and really stand out and you get these kicks of detail in the background."

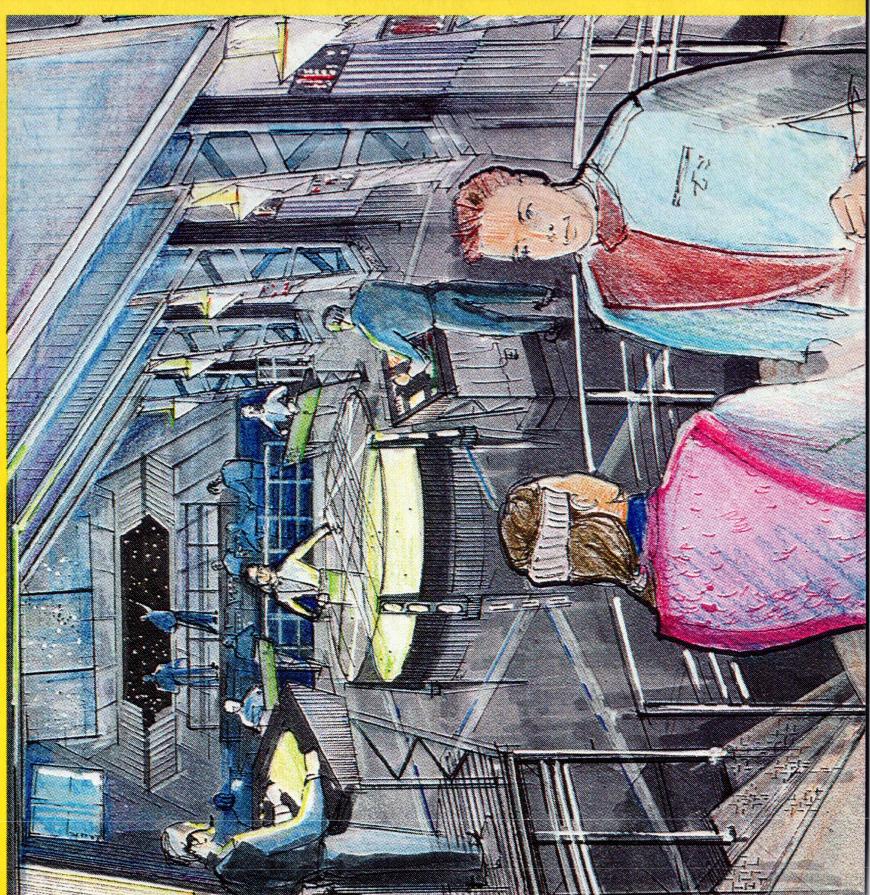
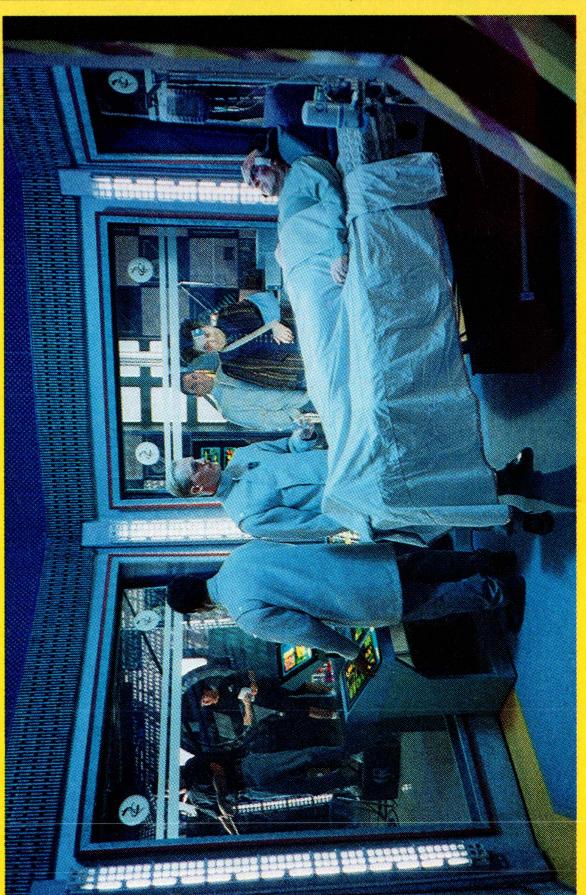
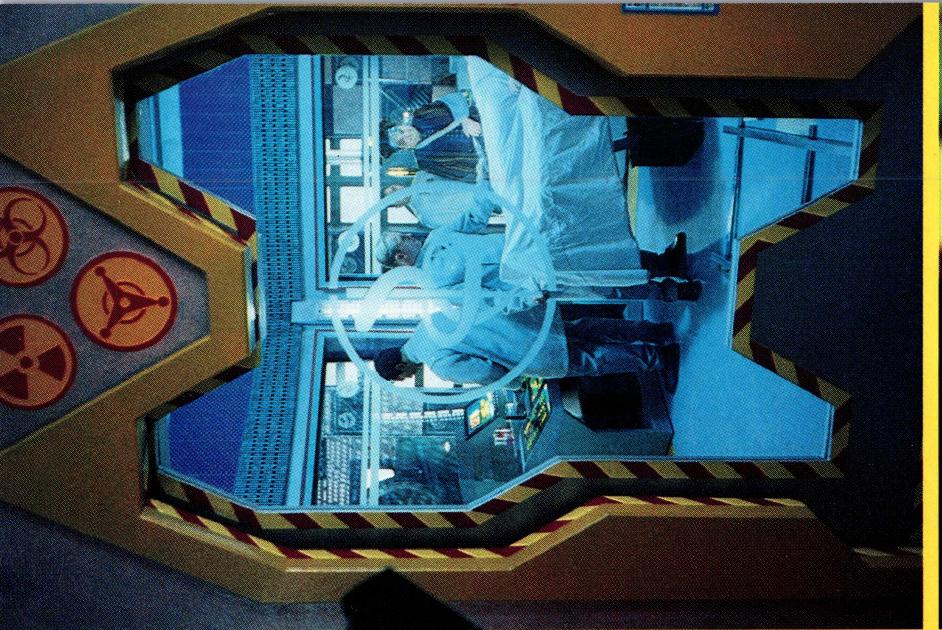
"Everything on *Babylon 5* is considered a work-in-progress," says Copeland. "That's the way that we kind of approach everything in our world. So we don't really have a problem with making those kinds of changes. We just want to serve the story. And we're really moving forward with that story now."

"It's become an even grander adventure now and I think there'll be more excitement in the story."

—Kevin Stevens



BABYLON BROTHERS: Actor Jeff Conaway with *B5* producer John Copeland (right).



BABYLON 5: YEAR TWO

Second Season Episode Guide by Kevin Stevens

The second season of *Babylon 5* solidified the expansive narrative style J. Michael Straczynski had created for the series in its pilot episode which first aired nearly three years ago. In the creator's own words, "We began pulling a lot of the triggers we've set up on the show."

While the series' visuals continued to be breathtaking, in Year Two Straczynski and his team wedded them to stories that added both depth to the show's characters and gave the *Babylon 5* universe not only a richness of style, but of substance as well.

The addition of Bruce Boxleitner as Captain John Sheridan gave the series a much-needed heroic centerpiece and provided Straczynski with a focal point for many of the season's stories as he continued to provide one of television's most complex and compelling narrative formats.

Season Two "The Coming of Shadows"

POINTS OF DEPARTURE ***

Written by J. Michael Straczynski
Directed by Janet Greek
Airdate: November 2, 1994

Bruce Boxleitner makes his first appearance as Captain John Sheridan just as a renegade Minbari warship appears. Sheridan, who's defeated the Minbari before, learns why the race gave up on their war with Earth as a result of meeting the last commander of Babylon 5, Jeffrey Sinclair. Robert Foxworth appears as General Hague.

The episode provides a fitting introduction for Sheridan, offering a compelling action storyline, along with an answer to one of the series' most puzzling philosophical mysteries. Unfortunately, the answer to this mystery is conveyed largely in exposition, rather than being dramatized, and leads to several intensely talky scenes undercutting what should be a satisfying conclusion to an arc that began in *Babylon 5*'s pilot.

"That was a very tough episode to write in the sense that that was one of the very last ones where Warners got very much into the process," says Straczynski of the dreaded network interference. "Usually our scripts go through a first draft and the final is really just for production purposes: changing sets, rooms and locations and costumes and stuff. That one went through four or five drafts because Warners wanted the character to be introduced in a certain way and they did the perch-on-the-shoulder routine which has its good points and its not-so-good points. It answered enough questions to provide some satisfaction and raise new ones in the process and got Sheridan in and working pretty fast, which is what they wanted. It's not really in my list of the top ten episodes from last year, but I think I did a journeyman job of writing it, and there's a very good job of acting on Bruce's part."

REVELATIONS ***
Written by J. Michael Straczynski
Directed by Jim Johnston
Airdate: November 9, 1994

Sheridan's sister arrives on the station, just as G'Kar begins to point out the arrival of the Shadows, who will come to be the greatest enemy the crew of *Babylon 5* will face.

Garibaldi, still in a coma from first season, is treated by Franklin using the healing mechanism he discovered in the episode *The Quality of Mercy*. Also, Delenn comes out of her cocoon, sporting a brand-new look.

This is largely a transitional episode for several of the characters. Sheridan is still being established, Delenn's change must be explored, and it's the beginning of the

really sort of set the tone for the season in many ways. A change in G'Kar's character is started and it brings the Shadows more into the forefront, setting a tone for the whole season. The lens changes. It is not one of my favorites because it was ten pounds crammed into a five pound bag—and I hate shoving that much into one and two shows."

Mira Furlan's responsibility here was to begin to show the changes in Delenn's personality. "I'm trying not to completely get out of the character that I've already created," says Furlan. "I'm trying to preserve the mystery, the dignity, the spirituality. All these qualities remain, but it's this emotional opening of the character that's happening in this episode, i.e. learning about what it is to be human and the emotional relationship with Sheridan."

Richard Biggs' character of Dr. Franklin began to see some of the ramifications of his selfless devotion to medicine. Says Biggs, "I talked to Joe about the flawless character of Dr. Franklin. And he said, what we need to do is to bring him down, bring out the character flaws. I think we're gonna swing entirely to the other side, where the doctor is not the perfect man who saves the day and always says the right thing and knows the right thing to say. I think you're going to see someone that can't handle the pressure, who is starting to slip and is starting to show his weaknesses."

THE GEOMETRY OF SHADOWS * 1/2**
Written by J. Michael Straczynski
Directed by Mike Vejar
Airdate: November 16, 1994

Londo begins his descent into darkness when he seeks political support from the mysterious Technomages who arrive at the station. Seeking their blessing, Londo instead finds himself cursed by them. Meanwhile, Ivanova is promoted to commander, but she may not want the promotion after her first diplomatic assignment finds her mediating a civil war among the Drazi (and in real life mending a broken foot, which was written into the script).

Michael Ansara appears as the Technomage Elric, and his warning to Vir is almost verbatim from Tolkien's *Lord Of The Rings* in which Gildor, an elf, tells Frodo (speaking about Gandalf), "But it is said: Do not meddle in the affairs of wizards, for they are subtle and quick to anger."

The Technomages are a fascinating creation, and embody Straczynski's fascination with the combination of



change in G'Kar's character, as he's the first one aboard to truly recognize the gathering clouds of war.

Straczynski admits that the episode's purpose was really to move the season into the more compelling *Geometry of Shadows*. "Revelations was Points of Departure, part two," he says. "I looked at Revelations to

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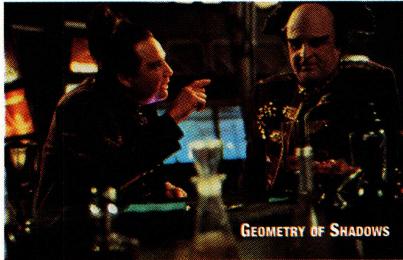
the technological and the magical. "It's definitely a favorite of mine," he says of the episode. "Some fans aren't as big on it because it had a lot of humor in it, although a lot of them liked the concept of the Technomages. I liked the humor, I liked the performance we got, but I was looking at Elric's long speech and said, 'I've got to cut back on some of those. I've been doing too much of this.' There's just too much stuff here. If you can't say it in ten words, then forget it. The Gettysburg Address was five minutes long and it changed the whole course of human events."

A DISTANT STAR ***

Written by D.C. Fontana
Directed by Jim Johnston
Airdate: November 23, 1994

Sheridan's friend and mentor Jack Maynard (played by *Twin Peaks* alumnus Russ Tamblyn) is struck with disaster when his ship becomes lost in hyperspace prompting Sheridan has to mount a rescue mission. In a comic subplot, Franklin puts the officers on a diet.

D.C. Fontana returns to the series for a single episode this season in a story that contrasts the former



GEOMETRY OF SHADOWS

starship-commanding Sheridan with his new post as commander of a stationary Babylon 5. It's a character arc that continues into the current season, as Sheridan comes more directly into conflict with Earth government authorities.

The lost-in-hyperspace storyline is a natural for the series, as little has been established about the technology involved in making hyperspace jumps, use of jump-gates, etc. It allows the series to do the classic submarine adventure yarn—a space series staple.

Richard Biggs saw two of his favorite storylines this season fall back-to-back; this one a comedic subplot. "I think it just shows that the audience can relate to the doctor a little bit more now," he says. "The problem with just coming in and saying the six-syllable words is that people tend to stand back and they're so intimidated by all the scientific, medical jargon that they don't get a chance to come in and laugh or feel anything for the doctor."

"The doctor will never be more than just the doctor unless the writers establish more about him," adds Biggs. "I try to find something that I can do that will help the audience become more personal with this character. I think it's important."

THE LONG DARK ** 1/2

Written by Scott Frost
Directed by Mario DiLeo
Airdate: November 30, 1994

When a cryonic sleeper played by Dwight Schultz (*TNG*) is awakened, a deadly force that may be related to the Shadows is unleashed on the station and the crew is forced to come face-to-face with this evil. *Twin Peaks'* Scott Frost provides the script here—and it suffers from the same problems as later-season *Twin Peaks* episodes—long on atmosphere, short on character motivation and believability.

The episode also suffers from production woes, especially in the creation of the monster. Dwight Schultz's performance saves much, but not all. For *Babylon 5* historians, the episode does give out vital information about the use of cryonics on Earth and more information regarding the timeline for Earth's contact with the Centaurians and our journey into space.

Straczynski concurs that there were problems: "The Long Dark could have been better both in terms of production and in writing. The creature, as it was revealed, was not what we anticipated. We'd hoped it would be much more than that and it just felt rushed to me."

Garibaldi develops perhaps the strongest connection to the half-crazed Amis, which may say something about his character. "Garibaldi tends to set up his own failures so that he's in control of his own pain or anguish or downfall," says Jerry Doyle. "Being shot last season isn't the problem, it's a symptom. The symptom is not being able to choose people correctly or wisely. And he's a

good character to play because he's so screwed up. You know, he's got so many things going on. He's always trying to make himself better. He's got huge defense mechanisms, big walls around him. He uses comedy to alleviate a lot of the tension on the show, but it's also a way of keeping people at a distance. So while at times he might appear glib and funny and off the cuff, it's a way of parrying life."

SPIDER IN THE WEB ***

Written by Lawrence G. DiTillio
Directed by Kevin Cremens
Airdate: December 7, 1994

Talia gets caught up in government intrigue after she witnesses a murder that may involve a radical "Free Mars" group. Adrienne Barbeau appears in the episode as Amanda Carter and Jessica Walter is Senator Voudreau. This episode begins to develop the government-conspiracy theme suggested at the conclusion of last season.

In one of several on-going in-jokes for science fiction fans, Amanda Carter's great-grandfather was named John. Thus, it's John Carter who pilots the first colony ship to Mars.

Andrea Thompson is particularly strong in this episode, but unfortunately, it will be one of her last. The episode is interesting to look back on in light of the events of *Divided Loyalties*. "It's like the Mafia, there's no way out," says Thompson of the Psi Corp. "I would wager there's a high burn-out rate in Psi Corp and a very high suicide rate in the Corp. It's very helpful for me, because it forces me to work harder as an actor to include all the possibilities. Just when I think I've got the character down, Joe will throw something in there that changes everything. It keeps me from getting lazy. We've got a lot more possibilities than on the run-of-the-mill show. There's no easy outs for Talia, and her concept of right and wrong no longer has anything to do with the Corps."

SOUL MATES ***

Written by Peter David
Directed by John C. Flinn III
Airdate: December 14, 1994

This is one of Londo's last appearances in the over-the-top comedic vein, as he summons his three wives to Babylon 5 in order to divorce two of them. Peter David is particularly deft with this type of material, as evidenced in several of his *Star Trek* novels and much of his work in comics. Jurasic makes the most of his last-hurrah as the light-hearted Londo.

Says Jurasic, "For me, it still remains one of my single most enjoyable episodes to do. The words, the emotion, the writing was so very strong. To find oneself in that position in life was glorious, a wonderful thing to play. That the Emperor has granted you a divorce and you have three wives. And Londo has named his wives Famine, Pestilence and Death. Interestingly enough, Peter David was able to take Londo's whole arc and to encapsulate it into a single episode. It starts us in a relatively comic way and then pushes it somewhere else. It was a particularly interesting episode to play."

A RACE THROUGH DARK PLACES *** 1/2

Written by J. Michael Straczynski
Directed by Jim Johnston
Airdate: January 25, 1995

Psi-Cop Bester returns and asks Talia to help him investigate an underground railroad of unregistered telepaths. Walter Koenig appears again as Bester, named after the famed science fiction author Alfred Bester.

Several interesting threads are introduced here as we learn that Dr. Franklin is aiding the underground railroad. The concept of a secret society among the crew of *B5* is also introduced, an idea that will be given full-form later in the year with the Rangers, led by Sheridan and Delenn.

"In this episode, Talia becomes truly torn about her loyalties," says Thompson. "It's as if you're finding out that your parents are mass murderers. Everything is changed and very dark and deadly. Bester, in particular, is a figure of fear—all Psi Cops are. They're the people who watch the watchers. I think at that point, she was still very loyal to the Corps, and she felt she was doing the right thing. I think at that time, Talia believed Ivanova's mother had brought her fate on herself. Why would anyone want to go against the Corps? It's like

talking to a long-time Catholic. Of course, that all changes for her later on."

THE COMING OF SHADOWS ***

Written by J. Michael Straczynski
Directed by Janet Greek
Airdate: February 1, 1995

A visit from the Centauri Emperor is a catalyst for both G'Kar and Londo's pursuit of their goals. The Emperor's death paves the way for Londo's final pact with the Shadows, and the war against the Narn begins. To top it all off, Commander Sinclair appears again with information about the mysterious Rangers.

A breathtaking episode, it's one of the series' best, combining monumental plot twists with equally fundamental character revelations.

"*The Coming of Shadows* was the big dark episode where things kind of turned for Londo with the visit of Centauri Emperor," says Peter Jurasic.

"Everyone really loved that episode. That was the one that we got the memo from the producers that said, 'We need to do more like this.' And, you know, I really sort of smiled, and just said, 'Yeah, we do need more like this.'

"In television, it's interesting when a lot of converging lines come together to make a good, solid, rod of drama happen. *The Coming of Shadows* was cathartic in a way for Londo because he had to cross a couple of lines. In this script, Londo out and out lies to advance himself and those were key moments in the script."

GROPUS ** 1/2

Written by Larry DiTillio
Directed by Jim Johnston
Airdate: February 8, 1995

Dr. Franklin's father (played by Emmy-winner Paul Winfield) leads 25,000 ground-pounding soldiers to the station. But does their arrival mean Babylon 5 is going to become a staging area for a war nobody wants to fight?

Says Richard Biggs, "I enjoyed the scenes with Paul Winfield immensely, especially since I really have admired Paul for a long, long time. To be able to work with him on such emotional and personal dialogue was a great joy."

The episode's subplot involves Garibaldi's relationship with a ground-pounding soldier and caused some consternation with actor Jerry Doyle. "When I read the episode, I knew it was wrong for the character," he says.

"They said, 'What are you talking about? All you've been screaming about from the pilot is 'When does Garibaldi get laid?'" Well, they wanted him to get laid, but in the meantime, Garibaldi had started something with Talia. I just thought it was kind of a shallow thing for Garibaldi to sleep with this girl who came on the space station who just wanted to get laid because she was going off to war.

"We did a big ad lib in that scene in Garibaldi's quarters where I stood up and said, 'Look, this isn't about you. This isn't about now. This isn't about anything other than certain things that happen in your life that cause you to stop and say I got to take a look at my life.' For the character there—it's the time in his life where he has to really evaluate what he does. There are consequences to everything that he does. For the sake of just getting laid for that five or six hours of, you know, selfless gratification as opposed to the potentiality of a great, wonderful relationship with this other woman, I didn't feel it was the right kind of trade-off. So they gave me a rewrite on it and, finally, he didn't get laid. And now Talia's gone, too."

ALL ALONE IN THE NIGHT *** 1/2

Written by J. Michael Straczynski
Directed by Mario DiLeo
Airdate: February 15, 1995

Sheridan is kidnapped along with a Narn soldier, played by Marshall Teague, who previously had a role in the first-season episode *Infection*. They're both taken to an alien ship in *Babylon 5*'s version of the ol' alien-abduc-

While the *Star Trek* series producers have been petitioned for several seasons by an active and growing movement of viewers to incorporate a gay storyline or character into *DS9* or *Voyager*, *Babylon 5* was quietly developing just that—and one involving two of the principal characters of the series.

"Yeah, once again we never get the credit we deserve," says Claudia Christian, whose character of Commander Susan Ivanova was part of the storyline that culminated in the second-season episode *Divided Loyalties*. There, she learns that telepath Talia Winters has unwittingly betrayed both their developing relationship, and the security of Babylon 5 itself.

Christian speaks proudly of the story arc, and while she notes that *Deep Space Nine* did a gay-themed story in a recent episode, she believes the one done on *Babylon 5* speaks more directly to the issue. "They [on *Star Trek*] weasled out of it because [Dax] used to be a guy once upon a time. But this storyline started to develop with Talia and Ivanova a long time ago."

"We had it growing since the very first episode of the first season," says creator J. Michael Straczynski. "The relationship was about all of that mutual antagonism that really means they're attracted."

Indeed, Christian says that she and actress Andrea Thompson (who's since left the series) discussed this angle of their growing bond and together decided to play it as a romantic attraction. Christian expresses some disappointment that Thompson's exit means the storyline is over.

"It didn't pan out quite the way we thought it would," says Christian. "She was leaving the show, so the relationship just had to be developed quickly and it ended quickly. It seems in my mind it was more like a one night stand than two-and-a-half years of falling in love with somebody. It was consolidated into a very short period of time, and that's unfortunate, because I think it could have been a very interesting relationship. I do think Joe did a very good job in facilitating the relationship and seeing it through."

Straczynski himself wrote the script for *Divided Loyalties*, in which the physical relationship between the two women is revealed (or is it?). The viewer sees the two women sharing Ivanova's quarters for the night. They draw close, and later, a sleeping Ivanova reaches over to find the other side of her bed empty and Talia missing from the quarters.

"I wondered when I got to that part of the script if I was writing this in a straight male-female context, what would I show," says Straczynski.

"Wouldn't a man and woman be seen kissing? That happens even in Disney movies. 'I don't know,' admits Straczynski. 'I might have shown that, I'm not sure. We're stepping into sensitive areas with this, and I figured I didn't want to have things snap back on me to the point that I couldn't do anything with it in the future. And I'll do more with this down the road,'" he says.

Straczynski is happy with the way the storyline played out. "In a way, it pleased both sides and annoyed both sides," he says. "I'm not here to reinforce anyone's political views. I'm simply going to tell a story and there are those who are, on one side of the coin, upset by the possibility [of a gay relationship on the show] and there are those who want to say that [the relationship] didn't really happen. Just the ambiguity there is enough to bring different interpretations to it."

To Christian, however, there was little ambiguity. "Obviously there was something going on between them — anybody who

watches the show regularly was anticipating something like that anyway. People were writing in after the very first scene between them. They picked up on their sexuality. I mean, aren't we a little old to be sleeping in the same bed at a sleepover? So you can read into it whatever you want, but I like to think I had a great night."

But will there be long-term ramifications for the character? "Admittedly, I'm getting a lot of mail from a lot of little girls with questions of me and stuff like that, but I certainly am more than proud to play somebody who's bisexual or gay or straight—I don't really care," says the actress.

When asked to define Ivanova's sexuality as one of the above, Christian says, "I've never really discussed it (with Joe). Was it a one-time thing or is this Ivanova's tendency? I think that whoever wants to read what they want into it, will."

"If a woman wants to identify with me, a gay woman, fine. If a straight man wants to have a crush on me, fine. If a little girl who's confused about her sexuality wants to identify with that, fine. Let them choose for themselves. I'm not gonna make any clear statements."

-Kevin Stevens

tion storyline.

The aliens here are even called the Streibs, doubtless a reference to *Communion* author Whitley Streiber. What makes the episode work is the psychological study of Sheridan that unfolds within the alien ship.

Straczynski says, "That really is the episode where Sheridan finally came to the forefront for a lot of viewers. Up until then, he had been doing a job but they really hadn't gotten that much in tune with his character. But that's when Bruce Boxleitner started being John Sheridan. It was one of the very first ones that his character really took off."

"Bruce's intensity was kind of a reward—a surprising reward for me," adds Straczynski. "As we played him up until then, he was somewhat on the jovial side, but here he started to realize the implications of what he's dealing with and it's a more sober approach to life. He may be a little over his head and he has to really learn fast and adapt to that. So it was one of the great pivotal turning points for that character."

ACTS OF SACRIFICE *** 1/2

**Written by J. Michael Straczynski
Directed by Jim Johnston
Airdate: February 22, 1995**

Sheridan becomes further embroiled in the Narn-Centauri War while Ivanova has to deal with another diplomatic nightmare, as she's asked to establish an ambassadorship with a visiting alien



(Paul Williams) who's interested in more than just shaking hands. This storyline results in a classic Ivanova scene that the fans either love or hate—forced to fake having sex with the alien ambassador, Ivanova instead convinces him that a gyrating belly-dance she performs is, in fact, sex for our species.

"I said, 'Let me have sex with an alien. I never get any.' And hence came this episode," says Christian. "I was reading [the script] and saying 'Oh, I'm being punished,' but it turned out fine. Fans either loved it or hated it. There was no in between. Some fans were embarrassed for Ivanova and some were just thrilled that I showed another side of her."

"My response to the people who hated it is, 'Relax, you've all done dumb things in your life, too.' And I had a ball doing it. You know, I like doing broad comedy. Look at my movie *Hixed*."

Andreas Katsulas' storyline cut much deeper and resulted in a startling scene in which G'Kar experiences a near-breakdown as a result of Earth's refusal to get involved in the devastating war. "It just really happened this year, where I didn't have to dance around the emotions of the character, they really started to happen," says Katsulas. "I found a way to be open, even with people tugging at my make-up and costume and the sound guy in the midst of it all. It was a real gift that came to me this past season. And I was shocked to see that it could happen take after take."

HUNTER, PREY ***

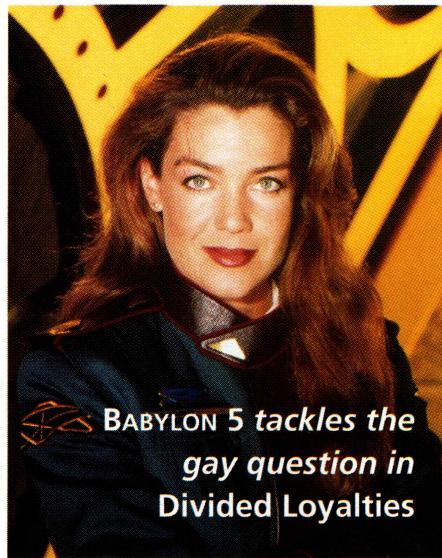
**Written by J. Michael Straczynski
Directed by Menachem Benetski
Airdate: March 1, 1995**

A fugitive played by Tony Steedman comes to Babylon 5 with definite evidence of the murder of the Earth President, forcing Sheridan to make a decision about who he's going to trust, a central theme of the series' second season.

Other notable guest stars in this episode are Richard Moll, Bernie Casey and Wanda De Jesus. This episode also further establishes Sheridan's "inner council" which will become more formalized in season three.

"Now that we have this information about the President's assassination, Sheridan's problem is, what does he do with it? Well, in the third season, we're finally going to confront that issue of the conspiracy, and that, too, will be one of the

WOMEN IN LOVE



BABYLON 5 tackles the gay question in *Divided Loyalties*

EPISODE GUIDE

triggers that gets pulled," promises Straczynski.

THERE ALL THE HONOR LIES ***

Written by Peter David

Directed by Mike Vejar

Airdate: April 26, 1995

Sheridan kills a Minbari warrior in what he believes to be self-defense, but when certain evidence turns up otherwise, Sheridan may find himself facing Minbari justice.

Peter David again introduces a comic storyline that becomes the highlight of the episode. Earth Force decides to open a souvenir shop specializing in Babylon 5 merchandise. Sheridan's reaction perfectly mirrors Straczynski's feelings about merchandising his space saga, especially made clear in the final scene, when the *Babylon 5* teddy bear given to Sheridan finds itself blasted out an airlock.

Straczynski recalls that when he read Peter David's line for Ivanova, that "This isn't some deep space franchise, this place is about something," he laughed out loud. And while David didn't think the line would make the creator's cut, Straczynski countered, "Oh, no, it's fallin' down funny." To which David replied, "You people really are dangerous over there [on *Babylon 5*], aren't you?"

AND NOW FOR A WORD ****

Written by J. Michael Straczynski

Directed by Mario Dileo

Airdate: May 3, 1995

A totally different format for the series, reminiscent of one of *M*A*S*H*'s classic episodes. In it, a new team comes to Babylon 5 to report on the Narn-Centauri War. The episode is told through the newsfeed broadcast by the ISN reporter (played by Kim Zimmer).

"Yeah, some loved it because it was a whole different approach to the show," says Straczynski. "It let us see characters from a new perspective. When it's on the periphery of the action, they all seem very different. Some are bothered by it because it's a distancing device. But I want a distance there. And some liked it, some didn't like it and for both it had the desired effect. It was an experiment and I figure well, you know, let's mess with the formula. Let's not ever get so locked down in our format that we cannot change it. The show is an obsession to me. An obsession requires you to take chances and fail from time to time."

IN THE SHADOW OF Z'HA'DUM ***

Written by J. Michael Straczynski

Directed by David Eagle

Airdate: May 10, 1995

Sheridan learns that Londo's contact, Morden, was also on the ship that carried his wife whom Sheridan believed dead. He discovers that his wife's fate may be tied to the Shadows, and their ancient world, Z'ha'dum.

It's an intense episode that crystallizes Sheridan's character and earns actor Bruce Boxleitner his place as the heroic, pivotal character of the series. "It's the high point for year two, up until the last two episodes," says Straczynski. "That was the one time in the series to date where we felt we really had it together. For the first time all cylinders clicked, and we saw what we can do when we just put our minds to it. I was astounded at how well it came out. Every week should be like this. It really gave us a high water mark this season to shoot for."

KNIVES ***

Written by Larry DiTillio

Directed by Stephen Posey

Airdate: May 17, 1995

An old, dear friend of Londo's comes to him seeking help and it's through this relationship that the audience, as well as Londo, begins to understand how deeply he's changed. William Foward appears again as Refa, the logo figure in Londo's storyline.

The episode opens with a spectacular scene that has Sheridan and Garibaldi knocking baseballs out of a park in one of B5's many successful "virtual sets."

"In this episode, the writer starts us out with a little comedic scene with Vir and Londo singing Centauri opera. Christopher Franke wrote the music, and he had the tapes sent from Germany. For us to learn that Centauri opera was a pisser to do," says actor Peter Jurasic.

"Londo's finally put in the position of having to fight his friend to the death," he adds. "For what? To protect my position. To continue to protect my position. Killing someone in self-defense is one thing, but in this case it was killing someone to kind of advance your cause. It was a heavy one. Londo has not come fully around to understanding what it is. We kind of address this in the last

scene when Vir says to him, 'How can you do this?' and he says 'Everything is madness. The world is madness. It's all mad. It doesn't matter. It's insanity out there.' Well, it's not insanity out there but in his mind it is."

CONFESIONS AND LAMENTATIONS *** 1/2

Written by J. Michael Straczynski

Directed by Kevin Cremin

Airdate: May 24, 1995

An outbreak of a fatal disease among the alien Markab population prompts a panic on the station while Dr. Franklin races to find a cure. It's a race that he loses in one of *Babylon 5*'s most moving episodes.

"The mistake that folks made when looking at that episode is taking it as a pure allegory which it's not," says Straczynski.

"What triggered that off is some research I did into the Black Plague and finding that there are so many parallels to what's happened with the AIDS virus—scapegoating, the blaming, the suspicion, the superstitions. We keep doing this instead of dealing with the problem."

So what I wanted to do was sort of deal with that irrationality on our part. It does have implications for the current situation. But, of course, in this universe things don't always work out. They didn't work out for the Markab here—and they don't work out in the real world, either. Every so often you lose."

DIVIDED LOYALTIES ***

Written by J. Michael Straczynski

Directed by Jesus Treveno

Airdate: October 11, 1995

The former telepath of Babylon 5, Lyta Alexander (Patricia Tallman), returns to the station with news that someone aboard the station is a traitor. As Talia Winters' relationship with Ivanova intensifies, she learns that she is the inadvertent spy, programmed by Psi Corp as a "sleeping spy." Ivanova also reveals the roots of her distrust of Psi-Corp.

She, herself, is a latent telepath. A powerful episode that deals head-on with the characters, it's a compelling end to Talia's storyline and opens up countless new opportunities for Ivanova.

"I think the Talia-Ivanova relationship was very tasteful and I thought it was very natural," says Claudia Christian. "I don't think they said, 'Okay, let's make Ivanova a lesbian and that's gonna really goose the ratings.' I just didn't want to have the boyfriend-of-the-week bullshit. At least give Ivanova some integrity—and if it happens to be a woman or an alien, fine. That makes it a lot more interesting to me."

While the story-line may have been controversial, Straczynski notes, "In a way, it pleased both sides and annoyed both sides. I'm not here to reinforce anyone's political views. I'm simply going to tell a story and there are those who are on one side of the coin who are upset by the possibility [of a gay relationship on the show] and there are those who want to say that [the relationship] didn't really happen. Just the ambiguity there is enough to bring different interpretations to it."

THE LONG, TWILIGHT STRUGGLE ****

Written by J. Michael Straczynski

Directed by John C. Flinn III

Airdate: October 18, 1995

The Narn-Centauri War reaches a bloody conclusion, and Londo takes the final step toward darkness while Sheridan learns of the Rangers' existence and is given the reins of their leadership by Delenn.

A spectacular visual effects shot shows Londo on the bridge of a Centauri warship watching the destruction of the Narn homeworld. And as the shadows cross over his face, the audience knows that those shadows have reached into Londo's heart, as well. It's an amazing moment, one where *Babylon 5*'s expansive visuals are used in the most effective way possible—to communicate a character's internal condition.

"What makes that scene special is within that are the roots of Londo's arc in season three, as it's starting to dawn on him what he's done," says actor Peter Jurasic. "As he's forced to watch the destruction of Narn, in that one little glimpse of him watching, we understand that there's something deeper—that he's not just a sort of fascist Mussolini. In fact there's a human underneath that who is really seeing what's happening, and it sets us up for season three in terms of Londo's transition from dark to tragic. In order to be tragic you have to be cognizant of what you did."

COMES THE INQUISITOR ***

Written by J. Michael Straczynski

Directed by Mike Vejar

Airdate: October 25, 1995

An ancient inquisitor comes to the station at Kosh's request to test Delenn's loyalty. Sheridan is drawn into her trial-by-fire and the inquisitor is eventually revealed as the killer known as Jack the Ripper whom the Vorlons took from Earth and have forced to do penance for his crimes by acting as their emissary.

An episode that harkens back to the era of live television drama, the story is essentially three characters alone in a dark room. But while the budget was being saved for the next episode, *The Fall of Night*, this story may actually contain more sheer drama.

Furlan is exceptional, as is Wayne Alexander, who plays the inquisitor Sebastian. "The question the Vorlon seems to want to know is whether Delenn is the right person to be leading this struggle at this time," says Furlan. "It's a very philosophical question, you know, whether she is the right person at the right place at the right time. It can be seen from various angles. It's the exploration of one's integrity, loyalty to self, belief in self. The thing with the whole process is that Delenn never actually knows what is asked from her, you know, and that's what's so disturbing in the episode. But that's how we humans go through tests in our life, you know? You go through something but you don't really know what the test about? But through that, you learn about yourself and that's what happens with Delenn. It was a very, very dramatic episode and I really loved playing it."

Thinking about Delenn's struggle in the episode, Furlan makes another point. "You know, it was kind of like an audition, too," laughs the actress. "Auditions are a metaphor for life. No, life is actually easier than auditions."

THE FALL OF NIGHT ****

Written by J. Michael Straczynski

Directed by Janet Greek

Airdate: November 11, 1995

The most complex episode of the series seen to date, both on narrative and technical terms, *The Fall of Night* addresses the ramifications of the Narn-Centauri War and at last settles the question of what lies inside Kosh's encounter suit. Or does it? Each of the races perceives something different in Kosh's appearance, and Straczynski leaves the reality quite open to interpretation.

"What I wanted to do was not make a big deal out of it in one sense, because if you'll make it about 'we're gonna-see-Kosh,' you sort of alert the audience to it. What I wanted to kind of do was sneak up on him where it isn't about that—initially at least anyway," says Straczynski. "Then it becomes about Kosh suddenly and it's a different problem altogether."

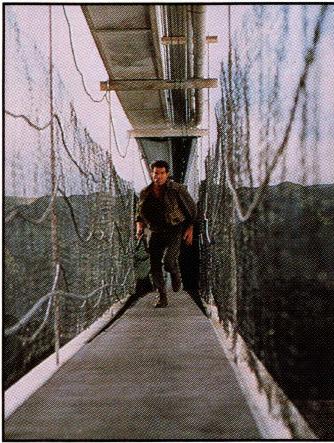
Of the final scene that reveals Kosh exiting his encounter suit when he ascends into the air to rescue Sheridan who has jumped from a sabotaged tram car, Straczynski says, "It took us a long time to get that shot done. From the moment we have Sheridan at the tram station, to the end of the scene with Kosh, there are 65 composite shots in that one piece of film, which had been a record for us. We just broke that. Episode number ten of the third season has 110 composite shots in just four pages of script."



review

GOLD STANDARD

Pierce Brosnan scores big in a so-so 007 outing



by Mark A. Altman

James Bond is back, having escaped from the limbo of litigation which has left the venerable secret agent more shaken than stirred. Unfortunately, his latest vehicle, while far more sleek than 1989's *License to Kill*, is still not the return to form die-hard Bondaphiles had hoped for.

While *GoldenEye* certainly isn't a failure, the fact that its story is more a pastiche of previous James Bond films than a coherent narrative contributes to many of the movie's problems.

GoldenEye focuses on Bond's investigation of the Janus Syndicate-led Russian underworld. Janus is now headed by Bond's former comrade, 006, who is plotting to detonate GoldenEye, an orbital satellite capable of rendering all electrical devices ineffective with a powerful electromagnetic pulse. That's easy to understand if you've read the press notes, but it's slightly more difficult if you're actually relying on the movie's exposition to understand what's going on.

At the root of *GoldenEye*'s problems is an absolutely atrocious score by Eric Serra. (How can you have a Frenchman score a Bond movie? It's sacrilegious). While it plays adequately on its own, the score works miserably with the film, undercutting much of the action. This has happened before in several Bond films which weren't scored by John Barry, most notably Bill Conte's horrible score on *For Your Eyes Only* and the non-Eon-produced *Never Say Never Again* which was butchered by Michelle Legrand. John Barry's Bond theme (and we all know by now it's Barry's, not Monty Norman's) has the unique ability to viscerally engage any viewer, sending the adrenalin soaring with only a few notes. So it's not surprising when Serra's oddly dissonant synthesizer strains kick in that the audience is left idling. If you doubt what I'm saying, look no further than the tank chase through St. Petersburg scene—rescored by John Altman (no relation) using the Bond theme—and see how it

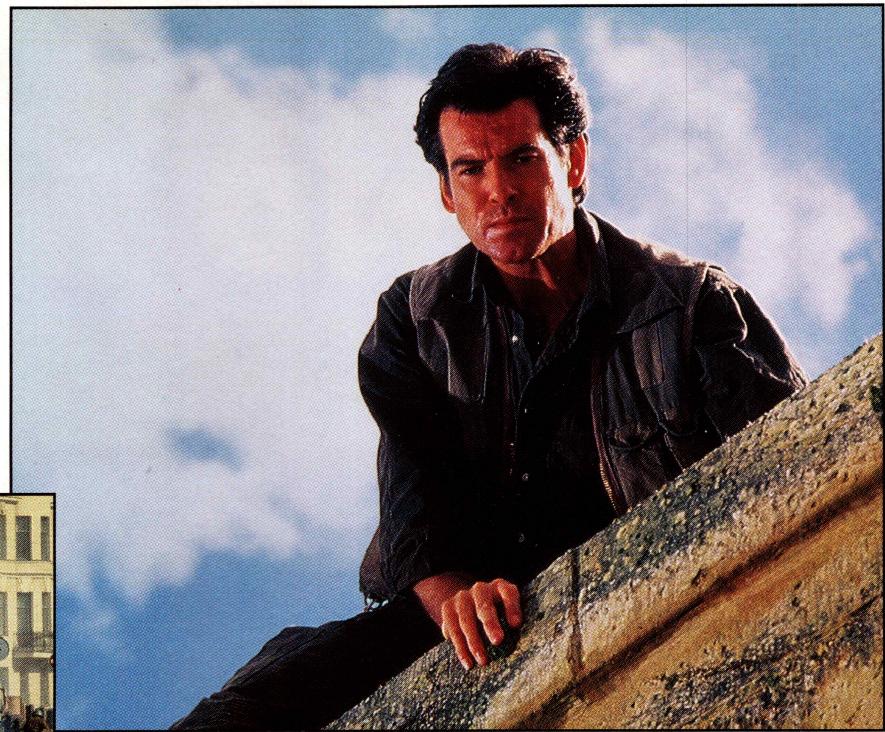
sends the action into overdrive.

If there's another nagging problem with the film, it's the script. (To be fair to Messrs. Caine and Feirstein, I have no doubt that many of the script's faults are due to Cubby Broccoli non-writer heir Michael Wilson's tinkering with the screenplay just weeks before shooting). *GoldenEye* is full of sophomoric banter and stale one-liners, sorely lacking Bond's usual ironic humor, and features a plot that lurches from one situation to another without a natural linear progression. In short, it's a mess.

Indeed, one of the most surprising gaffes is the amount of time spent in Servalaya, the Russian installation where *GoldenEye*'s satellite control is based. Bond is out of the picture for what seems to be an eternity while we're brought up to speed on what's going on back in what's left of the U.S.S.R.. Shortly thereafter, what seems like much of the film's \$50 million budget is used to demolish the set while 007 watches in Britain on a

GOLDENEYE (United Artists)

Starring Pierce Brosnan, Sean Bean, Famke Janssen, Izabella Scorupco and Dame Judi Dench as M.
Story by Michael France
Screenplay by Jeffrey Caine and Bruce Feirstein
Directed by Martin Campbell



photos copyright 1995 MGM/UA

LICENSED & BONDED: Pierce Brosnan levels St. Petersburg in pursuit of Natalya in *GOLDENEYE*.

satellite relay screen. It's a scene that seems lifted from a Jack Ryan movie.

What's surprising is the film vacillates in tone and intensity throughout. After a terrific set-up involving Bond's confrontation with his old Cold War enemy Valentin Zukovsky (played brilliantly by Robbie Coltrane) in which they set up an elaborate plan for 007 to infiltrate Janus, Bond has little trouble meeting up with Famke Janssen's Xenia and engages in some over-the-top antics with the villainess in a steam room before being taken to Trevelyan. We learn that 006's renunciation of queen and country has something to do with his being a Lyon's Cossack. This is some needlessly complicated political b.s. that could have—and should have—been left out of the film, considering we later learn he's just as interested in the money he's about to amass through GoldenEye's destruction of England's money markets as the lip service he's paying regarding his revenge against the Brits.

Later, Trevelyan tries to do away with his former friend and ally Bond by placing him in a helicopter set to self-destruct. This reeks more of an old *Batman* cliffhanger than *Goldfinger*.

There's a wonderful scene involving Natalya and Bond late in the picture in which she confronts Bond about his career choice. The problem, like most of the picture, is that this is a good scene in

the wrong place. By the last half of the picture, the movie should be propelled at a brisk pace to its inevitable conclusion. Instead, it lurches from location to location in fits and starts, with a small, intimate scene of human interaction totally out of place, considering England is about to get pulverized any minute by GoldenEye.

Another misstep is that the film lacks another Bond trademark: the traditional shoot 'em up at the villain's lair. Production designer Peter Lamont scores again with his Ken Adam-like hideout. But the base *should* have been overrun with Marines fighting against the Janus minions, instead of the lone Bond battling Trevelyan on a radio telescope after a Q gadget serves as the deus ex machina for extricating Bond from a tight situation. Instead of a *You Only Live Twice*-esque battle royale in a volcano, we get an ending which is more evocative of the small scale of Bond's confrontation with Sanchez in *License To Kill*'s final tanker chase.

This is not to say the film is without merit, however. Brosnan looks great in a tux, and he gives an engaging performance that promises the best is yet to come. Famke Janssen's Xenia Onatopp is the greatest Bond villainess since Luciana Paluzzi's Fiona Volpe in *Thunderball*. (I just hope they don't bring her back in the next film a la Jaws). Equally impressive is Izabella Scorupco's Natalya Simonova, the

Russian computer programmer who teams up with Bond to foil Trevelyan.

Certainly having a real director, Martin Campbell, at the helm has done wonders in revitalizing the Bond franchise. To be blunt, too much time had been spent under the stewardship of John Glen, an affable and talented second-unit director and editor, who should have never been allowed to direct (and cast) so many of the Bond movies in the 1980s. Campbell is not a great director, but he clearly has a handle on the material and brings to the film a certain panache and style lacking in many of Bond's most recent installments.

Yes, *GoldenEye* is more than the sum of its parts, which are a little creaky from age and lack of use, but Bond's return to the silver screen is long overdue and more than welcome. Some concessions to the times have been made, but ultimately *GoldenEye* is faithful and respectful to the three decade-old history of a character who has become a staple of American moviegoing.

And hell, if nothing else, Daniel Kleinman's main title sequence is a fitting tribute to the late Maurice Binder. It's a knockout which makes the film's other missteps far easier to stomach.

Bond's latest outing, *GoldenEye*, may only get the bronze this time, but fortunately, there's always next year to go for the gold.

HOW TO MAKE A BOND MOVIE

Since UA still seems to be having problems licking the Bond formula, I've kindly decided to provide a little assistance with the following handy guide for the writers of the next film.

A. TEASER

This must feature a stunt or series of stunts we've never seen before. It should not include bad rear projection work (or dumb jokes). It must feature the 007 theme at least three times.

B. OPENING CREDITS FEATURING SCANTILY CLAD FEMALE DANCERS. TITLE SONG IS SUNG BY A SULTRY, BLACK SINGER (NOT BY A TRENDY BRITISH ROCK GROUP, UNLESS IT FEATURES PAUL McCARTNEY).

This should be self-explanatory. See: GoldenEye.

C. INTRODUCE VILLAIN, EVIL SIDEKICK & CAPER.



The caper must be significant and the villain should be a megalomaniac. Destroying England is too small.

Flooding the world with heroin is too small. Blowing up the world, however, is too much. The caper must directly impact England. There must be a reason a British secret agent is involved... and not Dean Martin, for instance.

D. BOND IN CASINO. HE GETS RECALLED TO LONDON.

*Bond must play baccarat at some point in the movie...and win. Not blackjack—baccarat (otherwise known as *chemin de fer*). It helps if he is following someone associated with the villain.*

C. BOND GETS ASSIGNMENT FROM M

M can be a man, a woman or a hermaphrodite for all I care, but whoever it is will never be as good as Bernard Lee. Judi Dench is a coup, however.

D. BOND FOLLOWS A TRAIL WHICH LEADS HIM TO SEVERAL GLAMOROUS CITIES ACROSS THE WORLD.



Cities or countries in the former Soviet Republic do not qualify as glamorous. Monte Carlo counts, St. Petersburg does not. Egypt counts, Latin America does not. Vegas counts, Afghanistan does not.

E. BOND ENCOUNTERS VILLAIN WHO IS NOT A RUSSIAN.

*The Cold War is over. We'd rather see Russians as allies (*a la Spy Who Loved Me's Major Amassova*) than as enemies. We like the Russians, particularly in slinky black evening gowns.*

F. BOND HAS CAR CHASE IN WHICH HE USES GADGETS.

*This is extremely important. Bond has two great cars in *GoldenEye* in which he fails to use any of the gadgets provided by Q. This is a major mistake.*

G. BOND INFILTRATES LAIR.

The lair should be enormous, difficult to penetrate and feature lots of people in matching unisex jumpsuits.



H. BOND ESCAPES AND BATTLES VILLAIN WHILE THE LAIR IS OVERRUN BY OUR ALLIES.

*It is important to establish the villains as evil. Bond should not kill innocent Russians as he does in *GoldenEye*.*

I. BOND HAS FINAL CONFRONTATION WITH VILLAIN WHILE OUR ALLIES FIGHT WITH THE EVIL MEANIES.

*The villain should be fanciful as well as formidable. Trevelyan, Franz Sanchez, Scaramanga and Max Zorin are *not* good villains. Goldfinger, Karl Stromberg, Dr. No and Blofeld are.*



J. BOND DEFEATS VILLAINS, GETS THE GIRL AND THE END CREDITS ROLL AS M INTERRUPTS.

*Bond should not be interrupted by Joe Don Baker nor should he have already had sex several times in the movie with the lead actress *a la GoldenEye*. Bond's best double entendres should be reserved expressly for this part of the movie only.*

K. JAMES BOND WILL RETURN IN...

*You should know the name of the next movie so you can put it in the credits, unlike in *GoldenEye*.*

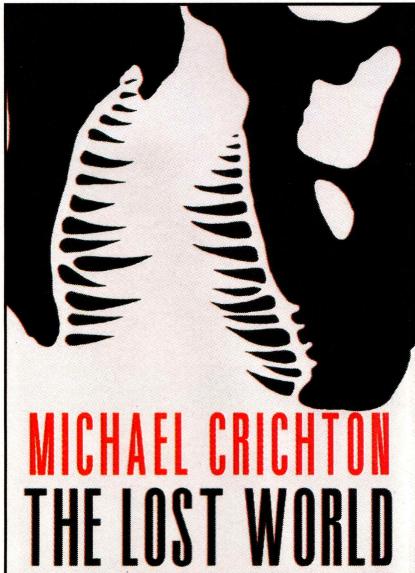
—Mark A. Altman



review

Michael Crichton achieved the impossible in the first 150 pages of this sequel to *Jurassic Park*: he actually bored me. The author plays a game of literary Twister at the book's opening, contorting his narrative to account for changes made between the *Jurassic Park* novel and Steven Spielberg's incredibly popular movie. In Crichton's original book, Ian Malcolm dies a prolonged death after being wounded by the T Rex. But in Spielberg's movie, Malcolm survives, as Jeff Goldblum was just about the only interesting human in the film. So as *The Lost World* opens, it turns out Malcolm didn't die after all. The rest of the characters from the original novel have moved on (no doubt Sam Neill and Laura Dern will be thrilled by this news). New to the saga is an annoying paleontologist named Levine, a handful of villains from the company that sent fat guy Wayne Knight after dino embryos in the first film, and—surprise—a couple of cute, precocious kids who stow away on Malcolm and Levine's expedition to the island where *Jurassic Park*'s dinosaurs were originally bred. Replacing Dern's Ellie Satler character is Sarah Harding, an expert on predators who's tossed overboard by the bad guys and winds up swimming ashore on the new dino island for her own private survival adventure.

As always in a Crichton book, the main plotline is just an excuse for a scientific treatise: in this case, it's the mysterious workings of extinction, and whatever new theories on dinosaur behavior Crichton has stumbled on in the past two years. Crichton is a genius at suspense narrative:



"Another trump card for Crichton's literary approach is the fact that he can be as dark and gory as he wants in his books—and *The Lost World* features more spilled intestines and dinosaur excrement than you'll likely see in the course of Steven Spielberg's entire movie career."

The Lost World

(Alfred A. Knopf)
by Michael Crichton



his technique seems to consist largely of having his character's thoughts interrupted just as they're about to reveal some crucial piece of information to the reader, and he feeds you chapters in MTV-friendly, bite-sized chunks which give the illusion of cinematic rapid cutting. But it has to be said that the multiple points of view prevent the reader from identifying strongly (or in some cases, identifying, period) with any of the characters—they exist primarily to provide us with their own expert knowledge on whatever is transpiring in front of them. Critics complained about the characterizations in Spielberg's movie, but they were actually far richer than the ones in the novel.

Another trump card for Crichton's literary approach is the fact that he can be as dark and gory as he wants in his books, and *The Lost World* features more spilled intestines and dinosaur excrement than you'll likely see in the course of Steven Spielberg's entire movie career. Ultimately *The Lost World* pays off because you can't help but be fascinated by the dinosaurs, and Crichton wisely loads the back end of the book with spectacular action along those lines. As cinematic fodder, however, it's a washout: Crichton takes 150 pages to get his characters back on a dino-infested island whereas Spielberg will have them there in the first ten minutes.

T-REX FOR TWO

by Jeff Bond

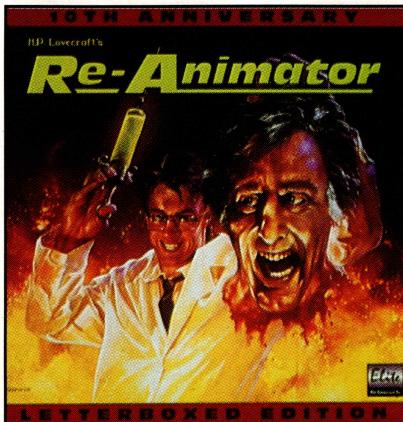
Michael Crichton returns to tackle the world of *Jurassic Park* in the blueprint for Spielberg's movie sequel



review

HEAD CASE

Stuart Gordon raises the dead and Elite Entertainment rescues the dead with their masterful laser release of *Re-Animator*



by David E. Williams

Continuing a tradition of excellence begun with its justly lauded *Night of the Living Dead* disc of last year, Elite Entertainment has now resurrected another horror milestone: *Re-Animator*. Made on a shoestring and first unleashed on unsuspecting Reagan-era audiences in 1985, this uber-gory film proved yet again that horror and comedy can be a highly effective combination when the material is sifted through the right creative sieve (WRONG: Wes Craven and *Vampire In Brooklyn*, RIGHT: Peter Jackson and *Dead Alive*, WRONG: John Landis and *Innocent Blood*, RIGHT: Sam Raimi and *Evil Dead II*).

While *Re-Animator* has been sporadically available on tape (and later on laser disc), the transfer was typically dark, panned and scanned and (worst yet) primarily seen in its neutered, R-rated version—a distributor-spawned abomination. Gone were most of the big blood/funny jolts, replaced with dialogue that never added up and ultimately diminished the film's visceral impact.

Fortunately, disc producers Don May Jr. and Vini Bancalari knew that this was exactly the kind of stuff fans wanted to see and restitched this beast back together in its proper 1.85:1 aspect ratio with a dazzlingly vivid transfer. The blood is red, the corpses appropriately icky and Dr. West's re-agent formula again glowing a perfect puke green. This will be the first real opportunity for many viewers to see co-writer/director Stuart Gordon's (*From Beyond*, *Fortress*, *Space Truckers*) auspicious debut.

But of course, there's more. Elite has supplemented this already-priceless edition with all the R-version material (so true geeks can program it back into the film), a quartet of suitably hokey TV and trailer spots, and a treasure trove of trimmed scenes that perfectly demonstrate why Gordon slashed his initial two-hour cut of the film to a lean, mean 86 minutes. The director's dry (yet fascinating) commentary track identifies much of this material and explains why it was cut, most notably, a lengthy dream sequence featuring the much-drooled-over Ms.

RE-ANIMATOR (Elite Entertainment)

Starring Bruce Abbott, Barbara Crampton, David Gale, Robert Sampson and Jeffrey Combs. Written by Dennis Paoli, William J. Norris and Stuart Gordon. Directed by Stuart Gordon.



Crampton au naturel—seen here for the first time (the scene, not her). The cast and producer Brian Yuzna are also present, adding pithy insight about the film's difficult (and extremely low-budget) shoot—as well as citing Gordon's creativity for the picture's success.

Can any disc top this kind of expert presentation? I'd put my money on Elite to try—and they just might with any of their other current projects, including *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Manhunter*, *Wild At Heart* and (though this will be a really tough one) *Maximum Overdrive*. This is how it's done.

RAISING THE DEAD

Re-Animator, the seminal Lovecraft-inspired horror/comedy, is revived, restored and extended—much to the thrill of its fans

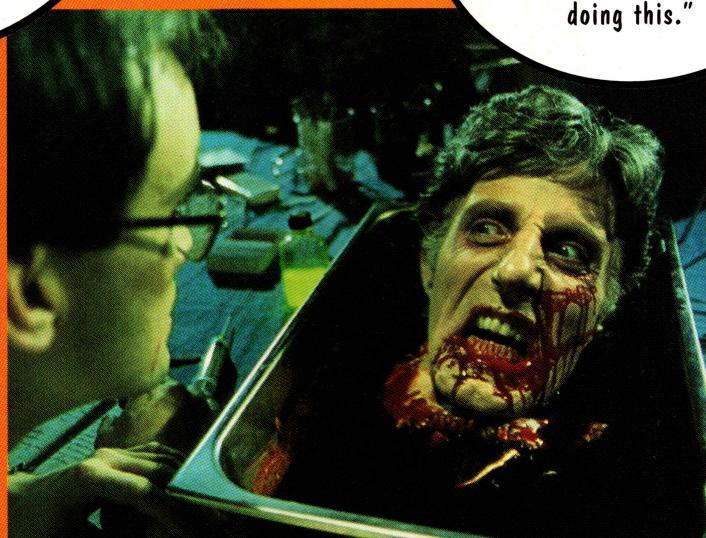
One of the finest evenings of my life was spent almost ten years ago with a gang of pals at a Halloween night triple bill scheduled at the UC Theatre in Berkeley, California of *The Evil Dead*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *Re-Animator*. The classics. We were in heaven. But *Re-Animator*, with its sexually perverse twists, unrelenting gore, legit scares and real laughs, was my favorite of that night—and still is. So when I got the invite from Elite Entertainment kingpins Don May Jr. and Vini Bancalari to sit in on the cast commentary recording session for their latest laser disc release, I jumped at the chance.

Meet the idols
(and at

"Oh, that is
sooo gross...I can't believe that!
I can't believe I did this
movie....This is it, this is my
mom's favorite scene. I just
loooove this part. Look at those
breasts!"



Barbara Crampton



Jeffrey Combs and the late David Gale.



RE-ANIMATORS (l. to r.): Bruce Abbott, Jeffrey Combs, Brian Yuzna, Barbara Crampton and Robert Sampson.

least one fantasy figure) of my youth? You bet!

May's directions to the studio took me to a windowless building in a crummy neighborhood in North Hollywood. Soon after he and Bancalari made introductions to reunited film co-stars Jeffrey Combs, a very tardy Bruce Abbott, smiling producer Brian Yuzna and a very funny Robert Sampson. Then the alluring Barbara Crampton eased over and asked worriedly, "Are our cars safe out

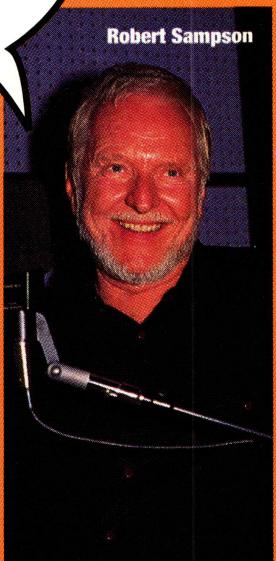
there on the street?" She was quickly assured with an "Um, I hope so" and whisked into the glass-walled recording booth. It was time to watch the film, torture each other with bad jokes and reminisce about the movie that just won't stay dead.

Most hadn't seen the film in years ("I've never seen this film in my life," joked Abbott), including Combs and Crampton, who recently toiled together with *Re-Animator* auteur Stuart Gordon on the direct-to-video fright tale *Castle Freak*. Sampson mentioned how he had intended to watch it the evening before, just so he could invent some nifty anecdotes, but was glad he didn't when told by May and Bancalari that the group would be seeing a restored (and unrated) version of the film. So with microphones in place, the picture began rolling and the group began talking. The rest is history.

—David E. Williams

"This scene,
where David's head goes right
into your crotch...David [Gale]
felt spiritually bereft. He said
he felt awful about
doing this."

Robert Sampson



capsule reviews

POWDER

(Hollywood Pictures)

Starring Sean Patrick Flannery, Jeff Goldblum and Mary Steenburgen
Written and Directed by Victor Salva



Powder is an occasionally daring plea for tolerance, understanding and communication between human beings. *Young Indiana Jones'* Sean Patrick Flannery portrays the title being, a hairless young man with pure white skin and a very intimate relationship with electricity as a result of a lightning bolt which killed his mother while he was still in the womb. As annoyingly self-conscious co-star Jeff Goldblum puts it, "he is electrolysis." Since the film appears to take place south of the Mason-Dixon line, *Powder* predictably runs into fear and prejudice when a saintly social worker (Mary Steenburgen) attempts to insert him into human society (and its most perverse manifestation: high school).

The hairless wonder quickly proves himself the heir to Uri Geller's throne by turning cafeteria silverware into modern sculpture, and an IQ test determines that he possesses the most advanced intellect on the planet, which naturally doesn't sit too well with the area yokels. The early scenes of the movie are so manipulative and drenched in post-'80s *Field of Dreams* feel-good mysticism that the ultimate effect is just annoyance, and Flannery's hypersensitive shyness adds to the problem by distancing the viewer from the character.

A fairly daring moment of physical male bonding between *Powder* and the Jeff Goldblum character takes on a disturbing undertone with the knowledge that director Salva was convicted of child molestation a few years ago, and there's a current of homoeroticism underlying much of the film. Ultimately Salva settles for a cop-out finale that forces his actors to stand around emoting at the wonder-of-it-all special effects, leaving the film a disconnected collection of emotional set pieces.

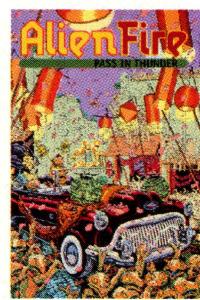
—Jeff Bond



ALIEN FIRE: PASS IN THUNDER

(Kitchen Sink)

Written by Anthony F. Smith
Pencilled by Eric Vincent



This new *Alien Fire* book from Kitchen Sink collects the *Pass in Thunder* story originally serialized in Dark Horse Presents and the two-part *Imagine* story from Plastron Cafe. While not as unified as the comic's initial three issues, *Alien Fire: Pass in Thunder* is a compelling read. In an SF universe where artifacts of Earth's pop culture are contraband, expatriate human Ed Williams makes a living by trading in black market Earth memorabilia—everything from Little Nemo to Leatherface, Basil Wolverton to the Beatles. Smith and Vincent eschew the ray guns and tentacled monsters so prevalent in

mainstream science fiction comics. With a lyrical story and finely detailed art, *Alien Fire* succeeds in ways few science-fiction comics can hope to equal.

—James Lowder

MILLENNIA

(Take2)
for PC



Captured by enigmatic aliens and transported to another galaxy, your task is to guide, not one but four civilizations through 10,000 years of development, from the invention of fire to possible galactic supremacy.



In your nifty space-and-time-traveling ship, you'll dart from one end of the galaxy to the other from the year 300 to 3300 and back again, as you help your minions solve crises, pick leaders and invent new technology. Just when one race seems stable, another experiences a leadership crisis or global catastrophe and you're off again to intervene.

Meanwhile, the evil Microids are working to thwart you at every turn, inexorably gobbling up the habitable star systems in the present and striking at your pet races in the past. Bouncing around among the different screens and watching the animations of your ship leaving orbit, entering orbit and so forth can sometimes take an annoyingly long time. Worse, the game is prone to locking up at crucial moments.

Still, *Millennia* is fun and engrossing. Clear the galaxy of the evil Microid scourge in time and perhaps your four races can develop the technology to send you back home.

—Mark Clarkson

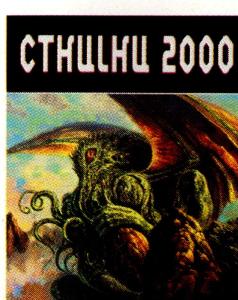
CTHULHU 2000

(Arkham House)
Edited by Jim Turner



Quite a number of writers in the horror-fantasy field have come under the influence of the ancient gods and tentacled monstrosities conjured by H.P. Lovecraft. *Cthulhu 2000* catches the various forms and levels of quality attending this reclusive late master's inspiration in an entertaining anthology edited by Jim Turner that offers 18 tales penned by such alternative world acolytes as Harlan Ellison, Gahan Wilson, Kim Newman and others lending an ear to Cthulhu's call.

This demonic deity doesn't raise his ugly head in all of these stories, but most of them do contain references to such Lovecraftian elements as the haunted town of Arkham and, of course, that evil page-turner fondly known as the Necronomicon.



A Lovecraftian Anthology
Edited by Jim Turner

Ellison's story *On the Slab*, however, remains the volume's finest dabble in delirium without any direct mention of the Lovecraft mythos, opting instead for an apocalypse fired with more fury than obsessive morbidity. Poppy Z. Brite's *His Mouth Will Taste*

of *Wormwood* is another that crawls very effectively (and gruesomely) on its own. The others range from F. Paul Wilson's visit to the mutant-haunted backwoods in *The Barrens* to Kim Newman's hardboiled take on scaly scares in *The Big Fish*. A couple of weak, overly vague mood pieces don't prevent the collection from providing convincing evidence that Cthulhu is still a name to reckon with. Just don't try to pronounce it.

—Thomas Crow

RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK

*Composed by John Williams
DCC Compact Discs*



John Williams' classic adventure score is finally given a complete representation on CD, with over 74 minutes of galvanizing action music. Included here for the first time is Williams' suspenseful low-key opening music, the pumping, manly brass and string rhythms as Indy swings over the booby-trapped cave pit and a wild explosion of frenetic brass figures as Jones dashes to escape the cave's volley of poison-tipped darts and rolling giant boulder.

Other highlights include extended versions of the Well of Souls cue and Williams' stupendous truck chase music, plus the slicing, brassy cue for the fistfight under the flying wing, the haunting woodwind playing of the Ark theme heard as Marion Ravenwood pulls the headpiece of the Staff of Ra from her shirt in her bar in Mongolia, and music for Indy's boarding of the Nazi submarine, the procession to the

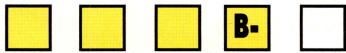
island setting for the opening of the Ark and the scoring of the relic's final fate as Faceless Crate Number One Million and Six in the government's secret archive warehouse.

There's not a dull moment here, the sound is superb and the packaging appropriately respectful with in-depth and refreshingly unpretentious liner notes by Lukas Kendall and quotes from composer John Williams. As far as I'm concerned, with this, the *Star Wars* 4-CD boxed set and the GNP Irwin Allen CDs under his belt, producer Nick Redman now qualifies for sainthood.

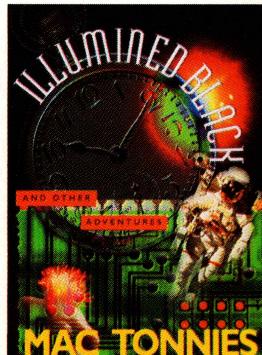
—Jeff Bond

ILLUMINED BLACK

*(Phantom Press Publications)
by Mac Tonnies*



Tonnies' short-story anthology is an odd mix of brave, mature, insightful and naively self-indulgent lit class conventions, sometimes in the same paragraph. "Reflections of a Specimen" provides ample examples of this problem. The main character, or "specimen," discovers through a diary that a college friend was really an alien. Interesting premise, even aptly written but in one regard: Tonnies takes the specimen's angst brought on by this knowledge too



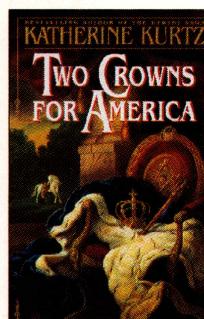
far, until all I could think was, "Oh, get a grip," which is not where you want to leave the reader.

Still, in *Illumined Black*, Tonnies has done what too few SF and fantasy writer do: create whole new fleshed-out worlds and convey them adequately without patronizing encyclopedia detail. I look forward to reading what he has to say when his life experience catches up to his considerable ability.

—Mary Kirchoff

TWO CROWNS FOR AMERICA

*(Bantam Books)
by Katherine Kurtz*



Kurtz's newest work is a historical retelling of the War for Independence combining magic and the symbols and beliefs of Freemasonry. What George Washington and the other Founding Fathers don't know is that their revolution is part of a greater plan, and they are but pawns in another game of power and conquest.

Ms. Kurtz' writing is fluid, very practiced and infinitely readable, all that we have come to expect from this venerable veteran. However, *Two Crowns for America* is solely a plot-driven story, which in this case is both a strength and a weakness. What a plot! Unfortunately, the characters all share a monotone voice and are virtually indistinguishable from each other, save for their names and titles. Because of this, and despite its strong plot, *Two Crowns* does not linger in the reader's mind. Still, if you like plot-driven stories with great historical detail, you'll like this.

—Mary Kirchoff

HOLLYWOOD '95

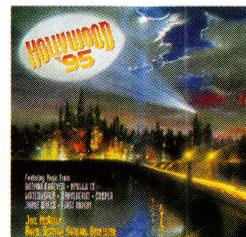
*(Varese Sarabande Records)
Various Composers, Conducted by Joel McNeely*



A collection of themes and cues from 1995's fantasy-dominated big-budget film slate, *Hollywood '95* features the Royal Scottish Philharmonic (evidently required for the bagpipes in James Horner's deadening *Braveheart* score) doing some vibrant takes on Goldenthal's *Batman Forever*, James Newton Howard's *Waterworld*, Horner's *Casper* and *Apollo 13*, Goldsmith's *First Knight*, and Silvestri's *Judge Dredd* score. The highlight is Jerry Goldsmith's *Judge Dredd* trailer music, which is taken a bit fast (in 49 seconds!) by McNeely, who otherwise acquits himself admirably on this album.

Goldsmith fans will find themselves purchasing the disk for the *Judge Dredd* trailer alone, but this is an excellent sampler as well. Silvestri's *Judge Dredd* suite and Howard's *Waterworld* theme come off the best, while a ten-minute cue from *Apollo 13* vacillates between genuine moments of excitement and Horner's annoying cribs from his own *Cocoon* and *Brainstorm* scores.

—Jeff Bond



capsule reviews

THE STAR WARS TECHNICAL JOURNAL

(Del Rey Books)
by Shane Johnson



According to the back inside jacket of this impressive-looking hardcover coffee table book, *The Star Wars Technical Journal* is 'based on the *Starlog Star Wars Technical Journal* series.' Sorry,

but this IS the *Starlog Star Wars Technical Journal* series, shoved into a sleek hardcover binding and sold for a lot more than the combined cost of the three *Starlog* magazines it contains. Packaging is important, but not this important.

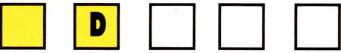
Johnson is a terrific draftsman responsible for excellent fictional reference books like *Mr. Scott's Guide to the Enterprise* and others, but the *Star Wars* journals don't show his talents off at their best. All the blueprints are in color and many are sizable multi-page fold-outs, but there just isn't the level of fine detail in many of the simplified cutaways that we've come to expect from Johnson's pen—he seems to have been put under the deadline gun here with too many different subjects for any of them to really stand out as the superb reproductions he's capable of.

That having been said, the end result is still impressive, colorful and entertaining, particularly when combined into one package like this.

—Jeff Bond

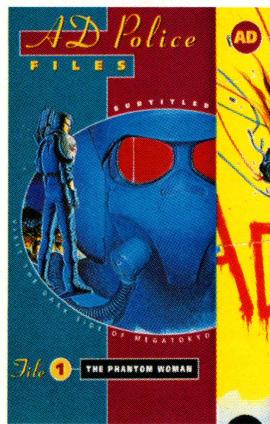
AD POLICE FILES: THE PHANTOM WOMAN

(AnimEigo)
Written by Nakazawa Takehito
Directed by Ikegami Takamasa



Spin-offs usually suck. Just look at bad clones like *Deep Space Nine*, *Voyager* and *Xena: Warrior Princess*. Here's one from the rib of the popular *Bubble Gum Crisis*. Crossing the other side of the tracks in Mega Tokyo, the AD Police Files get down and dirty in the dystopian future. *Phantom Woman*, the first of the files, stars rookie cop (are there any cops that aren't either rookies or almost retired?) Leon McNichol and his partner Geena (a mean bitch with a bad voice over) hunting down renegade "Boomers," the artificially intelligent android workers of the future. It's the most original idea I've heard since 1982!

Without any real freshness, the short length of AD Police would seem a blessing. However, it comes across as confusing, choppy, and without any character development. The well-paced action sequences appeal to the borderline misogynist in all of us (lingerie-clad babes moaning "Shoot me with your bullets"), so don't fast forward or you'll miss them. To stretch the running time, three music videos from the songs in the



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video play at the end, using footage from the original *BGC*. Strangely enough, I hope *AD Police Files* will grow up fast, because exciting possibilities exist for this series.

—Aaron Vanek

VECTORMAN

(Sega of America)
for Sega Genesis



With the advent of next generation game systems, *Vectorman* is not only the best reason to keep a Sega Genesis, it's also a strong reason to go out and BUY a Genesis. Loaded with humor, this game breathes new life into the tired old platform game format. In the cold, mechanized future, Earth has been turned into a toxic waste dump. Humans have fled for the stars leaving robots to clean up the mess. When the robot leader's head is accidentally replaced with a salvaged warhead, he orders all robots via television receivers to stop cleanup duty and start making weapons to ambush the humans as they return. Only one plucky sludge barge robot pilot, Vectorman, is out of communications range, and he must stop WarHead's robot revolt.

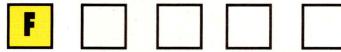


Vectorman boasts some of the best graphics possible on a 16-bit platform. The animation is smooth, and the game mechanics are innovative and fun. Each level is huge and loaded with secrets. Vectorman has at his disposal a great number of weapons and power-ups scattered through each level. At specific points he can also morph into other objects from fish to trains to drills. Recalling such masterful games as *Earthworm Jim* and the classic *Sonic the Hedgehog*, *Vectorman* is a brilliantly made game—one that will surely provide much whimsy and enjoyment. I can't wait for the cartoon.

—Wayne D. Chang

VIRTUAL COMBAT

(A-Pix Entertainment)
Starring Don "The Dragon" Wilson and Athena Massey
Directed by Andrew Stevens



Even Ed Wood had his moments. This doesn't. Why can't low budget, straight-to-video companies hand over their budgets to a young struggling filmmaker (I can introduce you to a few hundred if you're looking) who has something to say instead of creating crap so bad even late night television would be ashamed to show it? In this soon-to-be-blank tape, the directing is absent, the acting is worse than junior high Christmas plays, the cinematography and lighting make *America's Funniest Home Videos* look like the lost treasures of Gregg Toland, the makeup and special effects are worse than old *Flash*



Gordon serial films and the fight choreography is tame enough for the *Barney* show.

Virtual Combat was made by idiots (who are stupid enough to show their idiot faces in front of a bad blue screen before the video starts) for idiots. Guess what you are if you watch this? On the plus side, Athena Massey sure has nice breasts which she kindly bares during the padded running time of the film and Michael Dorn does voice-over work for the villain. (Sorry, Michael.)

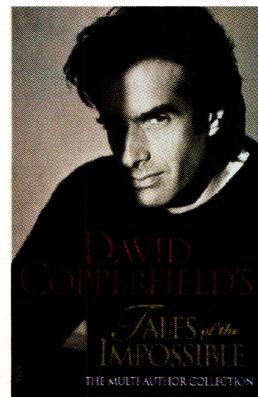
—Aaron Vanek

DAVID COPPERFIELD'S TALES OF THE IMPOSSIBLE

HarperPrism
Edited by David Copperfield & Janet Berliner



Magicians were the biggest geeks in high school. So anybody, even the actors, must wonder why a short story anthology should be devoted to people who idolize Doug Henning.



The first reason is that the clever writer Janet Berliner saw a TV show hidden in these pages. As of press time, Berliner is exploring offers to produce a *Twilight Zone* type show based on this book.

Secondly, great writers (who also must have been pretty geeky in high school) had stories packed away about these mysterious men in top hats and greasy moustaches.

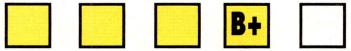
Some of these stories are stellar and they are written by people with proven track records such as Ray Bradbury and Joyce Carol Oates. Bradbury does a great John Updike imitation in a piece about the war of the sexes at a magic show. Oates is at her typically powerful in her short piece on suburbanites with no future.

Less famous authors also wrote excellent stories for this collection. S.P. Somtow and F. Paul Wilson's pieces are respectively funny and chilling. Unfortunately the book is not consistent. There are some real yawners, including the one by first-time author Copperfield. He should make a great host for the show, but he couldn't pull a story out of his hat.

—Andrew Asch

HIGHLANDER: THE ELEMENT OF FIRE

(Warner Aspect)
by Jason Henderson



Responsible for *Spawn* of *Loki* and other fantasy outings weaving history and lore, Jason Henderson is ideally suited to launch a book line centered around the immortal MacLeods of the *Highlander* film and TV series.

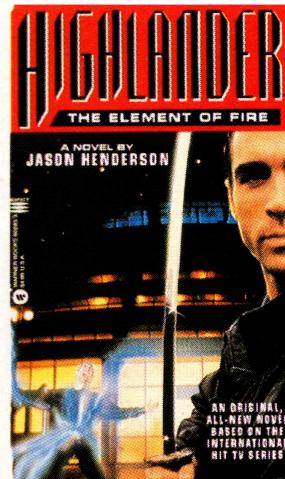
And with this latest novel, Henderson's tale, while still historical, enjoys an expansion both in time and place well beyond a single ancient or Medieval setting, due to the special nature of its characters. *Element of Fire* jumps from convincing depictions of prehistory to seventeenth-century Scotland, and ultimately to Rhode Island at the close of the nineteenth-century, as Khordas, a renegade Immortal with delusions of godhood, uses his affinity for fire to loot coastal villages and ships at sea.

Over the centuries, these incendiary atrocities repeatedly

draw the attention of Duncan MacLeod, who, under the tutelage of his adoptive kinsman, Connor MacLeod, grows in maturity from a neophyte swordsman of the Highlands to a sure and audacious practitioner of "The Game"—the compulsory quest for omniscience that gives purpose to eternal existence.

When a close friend of Connor falls prey to the supernatural pyromaniac, Khordas is put on a course of revenge across the centuries and continents after the Highlanders track him to his lair.

Henderson's deft renderings of swordplay and Steam Age naval conflict inform the climax with an excitement that at times evokes comparison with the work of C.S. Forester and other writers of nautical adventure.



But it is a subtext of deeper emotional and existential issues that makes *Element of Fire* a superior fantasy adventure: Duncan's inner turmoil regarding balancing his need to be a part of mortal society and simultaneously apart from it is examined in a series of attachments to mortals through succeeding periods that reflects themes common to vampire fiction without its more monstrous aspects.

—Rolf W. Maurer

I-BOTS

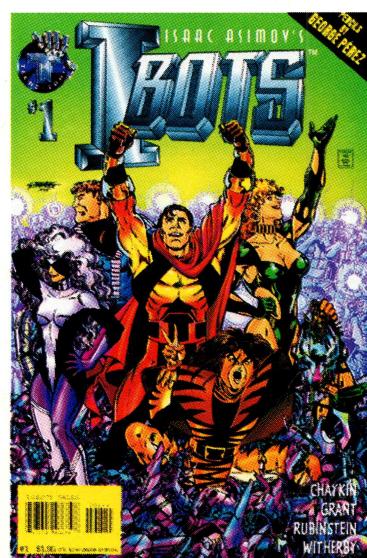
(Tekno-Comix)
Written by Steven Grant
Pencilled by George Perez



Based upon a concept by the late Isaac Asimov and developed by comics veteran Howard Chaykin, *I-Bots* offers up quite palatable, but rather familiar superhero fare. The heroes are outsiders controlled by an elusive genius (in this case, robots controlled by a dead elusive genius). Their ranks include such familiar types as the uptight leader, the flippan strong guy, and the near-uncontrollable clawed berserker.

Fortunately, Tekno-Comix has put their first true superhero title in the hands of two very capable creators—penciller George Perez and scripter Steven Grant. Perez spiced up the premiere issue with some of his best work in years. Grant also provides some tantalizing glimpses into the story's background world. As the series progresses, that context may make the heroes a lot more interesting than they seem at first.

—James Lowder



capsule reviews

DUST

(Cyberflix)
for PC and MAC



Diamondback, Arizona, 1882. Midnight. A nameless stranger walks out of the desert with no gun, little money and a notorious outlaw hot on his trail. Welcome to Cyberflix's new adventure game, *Dust*.

With the exception of Duck Hunt-inspired shooting galleries, we haven't seen much of the Wild West in our computer games. *Dust*'s interface—a combination of rendered 3D graphics and video-captured talking heads—is novel but clunky.



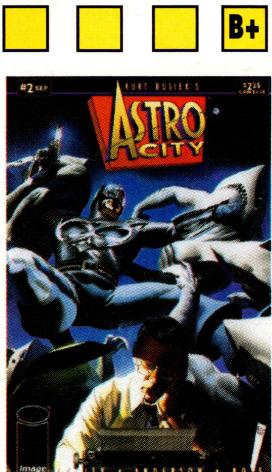
As you'd expect, *Dust* gives you shoot-outs to tax your eye-hand coordination (as well as poker games and one-eyed bandits to take your money), but the game is really about interacting with people. From Buick Riviera, the indigent continental (he's related to the Monte Carlos and the Sevilles) to those cute and cuddly saloon girls, everyone's worth talking to. Unfortunately, I found most of them to be more annoying than entertaining.

You need all the friends you can get, annoying or not, if you're going to survive. You also need money, a gun, and a new pair of boots. But first you'll need a place to sleep, 'cuz tomorrow the Kid's a-comin', and he's gonna be gunnin' for ya.

—Mark Clarkson

ASTRO CITY

(Image)
Written by Kurt Busiek
Pencilled by Brent Anderson



As with *Marvels*, his brilliant take on the Marvel Universe, Kurt Busiek strives in his new, creator-owned series to present superheroes from a realistic, character-centered point of view. Each issue, the heroes that populate Astro City are revealed through the eyes and words of a different narrator. Busiek's scripting is consistently outstanding, and Brent Anderson's interior art displays great versatility and style. Alex Ross's gorgeous painted covers are almost worth the cover price by themselves.

Astro City's only real shortcoming becomes apparent after reading a few issues at one sitting. Only then will you notice that the superheroes who populate Astro City, like the metropolis itself, too closely resemble their more thickly historied counterparts in the Marvel and DC universes. As Busiek deals largely with hero archetypes, some resonance should be expected. Yet in many places the overly familiar superhero trappings and types deaden the otherwise enthralling stories.

—James Lowder

MORTAL KOMBAT 3

(GTE Interactive)
for PC

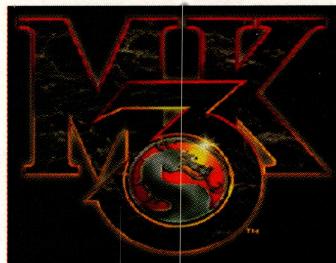


Mortal Kombat 3 for the PC is a faithful reproduction of the video arcade blockbuster that kids are pumping quarters into at this very second, complete with bloody spines, umpteen-gazillion secret moves, and those inscrutable start-of-game dragon icons that can have 'subtle or dramatic effects on gameplay.'

Choose from a bestiary of muscular, angry men, women and Stygian beasts and go toe-to-toe (or toe-to-cloven-hoof) for a little ultra-kick-boxing-to-the-death. If the computer becomes too predictable, you can take on your kid brother over a network or in side-by-side keyboard play.

With titles like *Tekken* and *Virtua Fighter* adding extra dimensions to the fighting, *MK3* is probably the last of the great side-view fighting games, but it definitely still kicks butt. The action is fast enough to bring a sedentary, thirtysomething computer writer to his knees in about twelve seconds flat: I've seen it happen.

—Mark Clarkson

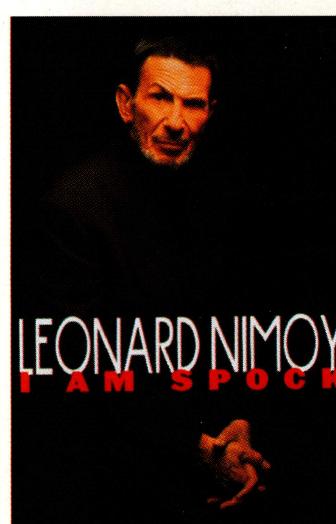


I AM SPOCK

(Hyperion Books)
by Leonard Nimoy



The wave of *Star Trek*-related twilight biographies continues with Nimoy's 330-page apology for the title of his last biography, *I Am Not Spock*. That slender volume was a reflection on Nimoy's entire career, interspersed with observations on the Spock phenomenon and how it had affected the actor's life and outlook. *I Am Spock* is, appropriately, even more Spock-o-centric, with the Vulcan's shadow looming over everything from Nimoy's boyhood and pre-Trek career to his *Search for Spock*-instigated directing days of the past decade.



One of Nimoy's recurring devices is snippets of inner dialogue between himself and the Spock character. While I found these hilarious when I read *I Am Not Spock* as a teenager, now they come off as a little bit on the precious side. Another problem here is that the rabid Trekkers who are the primary audience for this sort of book will no doubt have heard many of Nimoy's anecdotes about the making of the series (including numerous inter-office joke memos) before, whether in Stephen Whitfield's seminal *The Making of Star Trek*, David

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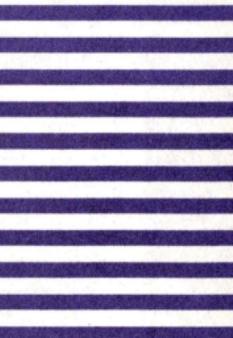


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Gerrold's *The World of Star Trek* or Shatner's various books on the subject. Nimoy's a trooper who wouldn't dream of hurting the franchise with dirt on behind-the-scenes backbiting and an extended chapter on the *Star Trek* family comes off as naive, if not downright obfuscating, in light of years of grousing from people like James Doohan and Walter Koenig.

He's open about the falling out between himself and movie producer Harve Bennett without dwelling much on the sordid details. Still, Nimoy is Spock, and his point of view on the character bears scrutiny. Overall, however, the tone here is just a trifle winsome and chipper for my taste. Bring on Jimmy Doohan and let the bile flow!

—Jeff Bond

LUTHIEN'S GAMBLE

(Warner Books)
by P.A. Salvatore



Salvatore continues his Crimson Shadow trilogy in this entertaining installment which is strong in moments but weak in plot.

Salvatore's characters are one-dimensional but his prose suits such characters well. Their roles are either utterly good or utterly evil, and once this is accepted their motivations and dialogue are enjoyable. Oliver, his halfling hero, is one of the most entertaining of his protagonists; Salvatore makes no apologies either for Oliver's endless one-liners or for his resemblance to certain other genre halflings.

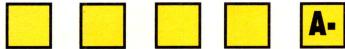
The plot, however, seems telegraphed. There are no surprises even where the high-fantasy style of story telling would allow startling plot twists. Salvatore's style has also become lazier; he hurries through moments that deserve more attention, skimping on descriptions and explanations

that would assist the ailing plot. He was far more thorough in his writing for TSR, Inc. I'd go as far as to suggest that, plot notwithstanding, the book would be more fun if it were twice as long.

—Kevin M. Costello

FRANKENSTEIN THROUGH THE EYES OF THE MONSTER

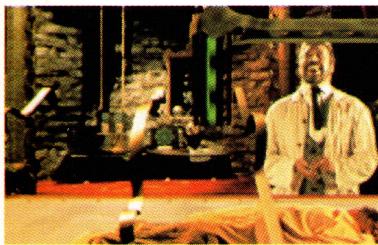
(Amazing Media)
for Macintosh



This is a genuinely original idea for a game: the player takes the part of the Frankenstein monster, awakening for the first time on Dr. Frankenstein's laboratory table. Your mission is to learn as much about yourself as possible without incurring the wrath of the ever-present Dr. Frankenstein himself, played as an egomaniacal lout by Tim Curry. Your shambling attempts at movement allow you to explore a remarkably detailed laboratory, rifling through research files and throwing electrical switches while Frankenstein needles you with observations on his own brilliance. You can climb up to the parapet where the doctor gathers electrical energy for his experiments, and perseverance

will eventually get you out of the lab and into the castle where Frankenstein's servants and family reside—and are they ever unhappy to see you?

The game's view of the monster is entirely sympathetic, with a stalwart sounding Robert Rothrock delivering the creature's



appalled verbal reactions to his discoveries. The graphics are as smoothly-rendered as I've ever seen and the filmed characters are blended in with their computer-painted surroundings seamlessly; this is a very classy game that's a nice

alternative to the usual shoot-em-ups that dominate the field (although you'll want to shoot Curry's Frankenstein character soon enough.) It does require patience, however: even an inhuman creature stitched together from corpses needs a helping hand every once in a while, and MacPlay offers a 900 number 'Hintline' to get you out of jams in the Castle Frankenstein. This game not only forces you to think, it actually gives you a different perspective on both the Frankenstein legend and the possibilities of role playing games.

—Jeff Bond

SISTERS OF THE NIGHT

(Warner Books)
Edited by Barbara Hambly & Martin H. Greenberg

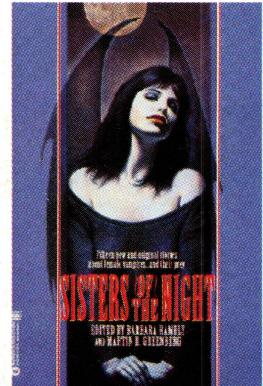


As banshees, ghouls, madams, moms and, in one unfortunate attempt, monkeys, the female vampires in *Sisters of The Night* turn up in the house up the street behind the doors of the office on the 13th floor, in the hull of a little boat docked at the end of a rickety pier as well as in countless cemeteries, swamps and moors around the world throughout history. Only in two or three instances, however, do the stories in this collection achieve a degree of depth and resonance which sets them apart from the average crop of responses to a call for female vampire stories on a community bulletin board.

M. John Harrison's "Empty," a contemporary chiller set on the British moors is among the best of these. Its moodiness and super-realism give the reader a sense of watching the story unfold through a rain-spattered blue glass lens. Exceptional for near-handed black humor and inventiveness are editor Barbara Hambly's "Madeleine," the story of an otherwise classic turn-of-the-century vamp feeling the first pangs of something like a conscience for her victims, and George Alec Effinger's "Marid and the Trail of Blood," a futuristic whodunit set in the Middle East.

Sisters of the Night is flawed by the presentation of few very good stories in the midst of several very bad ones. This is only an opinion. With five or six typos in the text and a cover blurb boasting fifteen new and original stories when there are really only fourteen with an introduction, one of the book's main drawbacks is that it was badly copy edited. That is a fact.

—Stacey Szewczyk



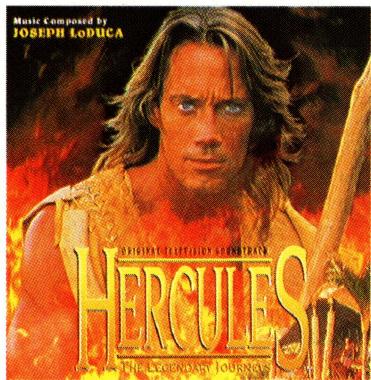
capsule reviews

HERCULES: THE LEGENDARY JOURNEYS

(Varese Sarabande Records)
Music by Joseph LoDuca



At over an hour in length, this is an unusually comprehensive representation of Joe LoDuca's music for the first four *Hercules* TV movies and an enjoyable listen if you don't concern yourself too much with LoDuca's sources. He has a tendency to grab for the nearest SF blockbuster score when confronted with an action sequence: the pillaging begins early with the lifting of Elliott Goldenthal's *Demolition Man* action music, and later segments feature blatant steals from Horner's *Aliens*, Laurence Rosenthal's *Clash of the Titans*, and Pouledaris' *Conan the Barbarian*, while the final movie, *Hercules and the Underworld*, is a nonstop pastiche of Bernard Herrmann.



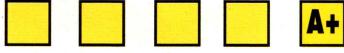
LoDuca fairs much better in the ethnic effects he incorporates into other sequences, many involving choral work. Particularly exciting is the vocal chanting and rhythms used in the "Preparing for Battle" cue from *Hercules and the Amazon Women*.

His *Hercules* title theme itself is enjoyable and appropriately reminiscent of both *Superman* and Elmer Bernstein's *The Ten Commandments* music, a mix of forward-charging power and mythic sentiment just like the show itself. Ultimately this is an impressive orchestral showcase for a television score, and the goofy charm of the series goes a long way towards making LoDuca's cribbing forgivable.

—Jeff Bond

HEXEN

(id)
for PC



There's a new king of the *Doom* clones, and its name is *Hexen*.

Set in and about the chillingly realized castle of the Serpent Rider Korax, *Hexen*—Id and Raven's sequel to *Heretic*—pushes the *Doom* engine to new heights of realism and spookiness. Dry leaves flutter, lightning flashes, thunder rumbles and earthquakes shatter the ground beneath your feet, casting you to your death.

Level layout is more sophisticated as well. Instead of moving in linear fashion from one level to the next, you'll revisit certain hub levels again and again as you explore the many sub-levels branching off from them.

Play as one of three characters: fighter, cleric or mage. Each has different abilities and weapons, but don't expect a RPG—



Hexen is a killfest à la *Doom*, albeit an exceedingly creepy one.

There are nasty new baddies and an arsenal of terrific new weapons, both magical and mundane. My favorite, the Wraithverge, calls up the wailing spirits of the dead to shred your enemies. It's almost frightening to use.

Hexen rocks hard. Buy it.

—Mark Clarkson

CAPTAINS' LOGS: THE UNAUTHORIZED COMPLETE TREK GUIDEBOOK

(Little Brown & Sons)
by Edward Gross and Mark A. Altman

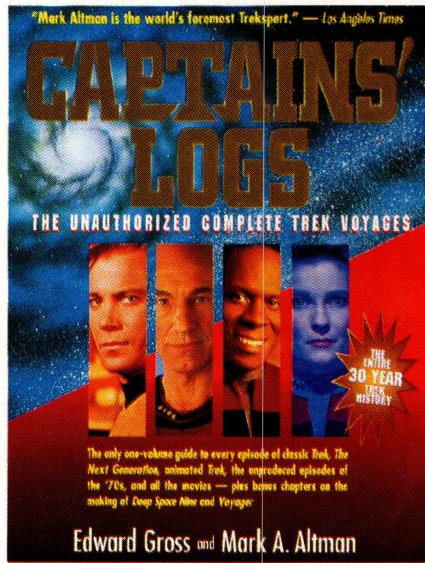


Eyestrain alert! Hardcore Trekkers should prepare to belly up to the trough for the final, ultimate feeding frenzy of *Star Trek* lore, as assembled in Herculean fashion by world-renowned 'Trekspert' (and editor of this magazine) Mark A. Altman, along with *Cinescape*'s Ed Gross. 'Comprehensive' doesn't begin to describe this effort, which follows the Trek saga from its inception in the mid-'60s right up to the present day's orgy of syndicated programming and feature films. Every episode produced up to the end of the 1994/95 season is examined, and interviews with the show's various producers, writers, crew persons and actors bring a much needed perspective to what could have been yet another recitation of plotlines and guest stars.

Captains' Logs shows us how these episodes became what they are, often metamorphosing from very different original concepts to the familiar stories we see today. Since this isn't a Paramount-authorized edition, Altman and Gross don't shy away from the downside of the *Trek* phenomenon, from the foibles of series creator Gene Roddenberry and original star William Shatner's to the all-but-forgotten contribution of producer Gene L. Coon and others. Although some material has been drawn from Altman's superb coverage of the shows in *Cinefantastique*, there's tons of information assembled here for the first time anywhere, and the balance of commentary from so many prime movers involved with the shows makes for what has to be the ultimate guidepost to the *Star Trek* production process: its results, its failures and its successes, appended with some cogent thoughts on the possible future of the franchise.

If there's any problem with this sort of book, it's the impossibility of incorporating the entire *Star Trek* history into anything other than a rewritable CD: *Captains' Logs* has already been made obsolete in a way, but until Altman and Gross come up with volume two, this is the best we're going to get.

—Jeff Bond



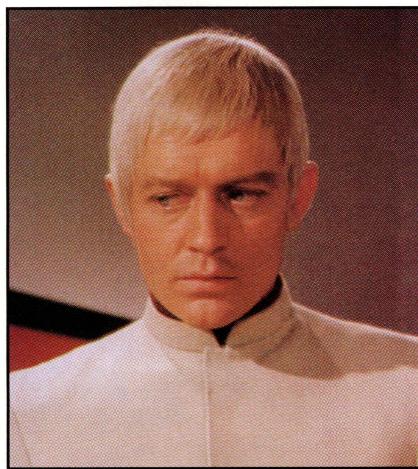
Edward Gross and Mark A. Altman



classic review

UNFRIENDLY FLYING OOOO-FOES

Examining the unsung genius of Gerry Anderson's *UFO*



by Robert Meyer Burnett

Fifteen years before agents Scully and Mulder searched high and low for evidence of governmental knowledge of extraterrestrial contact, an ultra-secret, multinational organization not only had proof of such visitations but actually waged a costly, bitter and lonely covert struggle against a dying race of alien invaders bent on plundering the earth's greatest resource: the human race itself. As depicted in celebrated genre producer Gerry Anderson's first live-action series *UFO* (which, until the debut of *The X-Files*, could easily be considered genre television's most darkly fatalistic program), the government conspirators themselves were the heroes, protecting their secrets at all costs to spare mankind the torturous knowledge of the terrible threat it faced. Unlike the currently vogue sentiment of the mantra "Trust no one," *UFO* seemed to say "Trust us," reassuring viewers that not only were the world's governments aware of the alien threat, but that they had banded together to do everything in their powers to prevent its success—a shocking ideological underpinning consid-

ering the program was produced for one season in Britain during the "White Album" year of 1969.

Although *UFO* only ran 26 episodes, the show represented the culmination of ideas and techniques producer Anderson had perfected throughout his run of "Supermarionation" series during the '60s. Beginning with *Supercar* and *Fireball XL-5*, then progressing through *Stingray*, the beloved *Thunderbirds*, *Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons*, *Joe 90* and *Secret Agent*, Anderson's love of technology and its use by benevolent paramilitary organizations for the benefit all humanity reached a new level with *UFO*. For the first time, Anderson found himself working with a sizable cast of real actors, full-scale sets and a new level of effects work from his seasoned crew, led by his frequent collaborator, the late Derek Meddings. The final result, in addition to being a bang-up action-adventure program, maintained a sort of unique continuity with his previous efforts.

UFO made one of the first credible attempts of an hour-long genre series to establish a show-by-show continuity. The debut, entitled *Identified*, began with a

vicious teaser sequence set in 1970. While photographing a UFO landing site in the English countryside, Peter Carlin and his sister Leila are attacked by a space-suited alien who fires on them in a spectacular weapon's eye POV reminiscent of the recent *Doom* computer game. While his sister is killed, Peter escapes, his film winding up in the hands of Colonel Ed Straker (the very intense Ed Bishop) and General Henderson (Grant Taylor), later series rivals, who present the film as irrefutable proof of the existence of UFO's. On their way to a meeting with members of other European nations to share their findings, their motorcade, in another impressive sequence, falls under UFO attack and Straker barely escapes with his life.

Flashing forward ten years to 1980, where the bulk of the series takes place, Colonel Straker is now Commander of SHADO (Supreme Headquarters Alien Defense Organization). SHADO, manned by a compliment of personnel from countries around the world, runs a planet-wide network of military might, including a fleet of submarines called "Skydivers," a squadron of tanks (mobiles), a SID (Space Intruder

Detector), a super-sophisticated orbiting satellite and a network of operatives the world over. The first line of SHADO's alien defense is Moonbase, whose fleet of Interceptors is meant to be able to knock out most UFO's before they make their way to earth. In a slightly wacky conceit, SHADO's earth-bound headquarters exists eighty feet below Harlington-Straker film studios, forcing Commander Straker to moonlight as a film mogul. No one working at the studio even dreams of Straker's real avocation. Unfortunately, this admittedly amusing situation is seldom made use of in the series and seems only to be a convenient way of cutting costs by allowing the production team access to a backlot whenever they needed it.

By the end of the first episode, SHADO, after obtaining its first alien body, ascertains the invaders are a sterile and dying race using humans as organ donors to survive, which explains the long string of disappearances and mutilations following UFO incidents. In a chilling coda, Straker must inform Peter Carlin, now a high-ranking SHADO operative, that his sister's heart was discovered inside the dead alien. After ten years of uncertainty, Carlin can never tell his relatives the truth about his sister's death. The episode ends with a somber voiceover by Straker at Leila's cremation pondering the nature of the universe. The deadly serious tone and downbeat nature of this conclusion became a series staple.

For a perfunctory introductory episode, *Identified* does a marvelous job of detailing the workings of SHADO and introducing the cast of recurring characters, especially the star Ed Straker. Interestingly, although most of the principal cast recurs throughout the series, only Ed Bishop's Commander Straker appears in every episode. Without a doubt, he is the series' focus. Tragic and sympathetic in true epic fashion, Ed Straker remains one of the great characters in televised science fiction. Whether faced with the daunting task of informing a respected friend of the fate of his sister, trying to maintain a relationship with his family or facing potential death at the hands of extraterrestrials, Straker's unwavering sense of duty to both himself and the rest of the human race remains unquestionable. His personal sacrifices throughout *UFO's*

personal life: *Confetti Check A-OK* and the shattering *A Question of Priorities*. In *Confetti Check*, a flashback episode, Straker's recent marriage to wife Mary (Suzannah Neve) remains threatened by his increasing commitments to setting up SHADO. Because absolute secrecy must be maintained, Mary can never know the truth about Straker's activities. Pregnant with their first child, Mary suspects her husband's increasingly long stretches away from home can only mean he's having an affair. SHADO comes on-line just as Straker's son is about to be born when Mary's mother has Straker followed. Unfortunately he's observed meeting with a girl (Nina Barry, later turning up as part



of Moonbase's crew), seemingly confirming Mary's worst suspicions. Confronting a helpless Straker, Mary declares she's leaving him and in a fit of anger, falls down a flight of stairs almost killing both her and her baby. It's a situation hardly standard in genre television fare.

Years later, things are far worse in the Straker household. In *Priorities*, Mary (once again portrayed by Suzannah Neve), long divorced from Straker, has remarried. Straker sees their son John only one weekend a month. After returning from a wonderful afternoon at the film studio with his son, Straker is powerless to stop an accident which leaves John barely alive. His only hope for survival is an experimental American antibiotic which must be flown in. But while the transport Straker ordered to bring the drug makes its way across the Atlantic, SHADO begins receiving signals which may be from an earthbound alien attempting to make contact. Unable to put

UFO (Century 21 Television Production/ATV for ITC Worldwide)
Starring Ed Bishop, George Sewell and Michael Billington.
Concept by Gerry & Sylvia Anderson and Reg Hill.
Executive Producer: Gerry Anderson
Aired: 1969/70, 26 Episodes

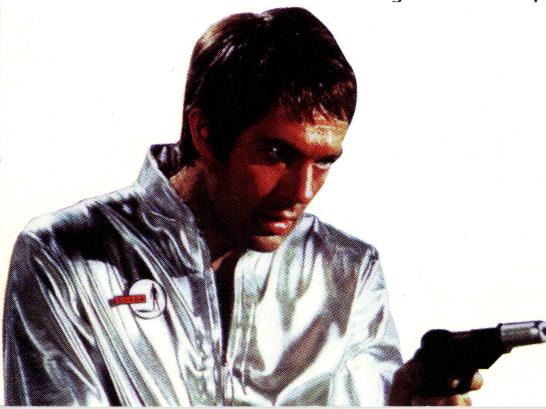


his son's fate before SHADO operations, Straker allows the transport to be diverted to investigate the signals. Eventually, Straker loses both the alien and his son's life, failing on both ends. The episode ends with Mary screaming that she never wants to see Straker again, leaving him alone in a hospital lobby.

Today, the *X-Files* generates little emotional involvement for an audience, even with its mounting deaths of the principal characters' relatives. Most of the episodes, with exceptions like *One Breath*, are so emotionally monotone hardly any feeling at all is elicited from the audience. In *UFO*, though, when Ed Straker, perhaps the only man on Earth capable of effectively leading SHADO's war against the alien aggressors, loses his son, the moment remains as devastating as anything ever produced for television.

And if Ed Straker represents *UFO's* conscience and emotional center, Colonel Paul Foster (Michael Billington, who also portrayed the boyfriend of Triple X who is killed by Bond in the opening of *The Spy Who Loved Me*) draws the unenviable task of not only serving as the requisite hunky sex symbol, but also remaining the physical punching bag for the series. Being series stud comes with a huge price tag in the *UFO* universe.

Once a suave, lady-killing test pilot, Foster becomes obsessed with discovering the existence of SHADO after inadvertently becoming involved in a fatal UFO incident which left his plane destroyed and his co-pilot dead. Unlike Mulder, it takes Foster only one episode (*Exposed*) to track Straker and SHADO down. Given a choice—death or a commission—Foster quickly becomes a series regular. And during his tenure, he has taken the brunt of war on his own shoulders. In *Survival*, he finds himself shot down on the surface of the moon only to have to cooperate with an alien in order to survive. In *Ordeal*, he's kidnapped by aliens and almost turned into one of them. In *Court Martial*, Foster is found guilty of espionage and sentenced to death. And finally, in *Reflections in the Water*, Foster almost dies in a alien base at the bottom of the ocean. Unlike Mulder, who can never get a break, Foster uncovers the truth only



to discover his troubles are only beginning.

UFO, in addition to being the first Anderson production where characters are actually more important than the tremendous hardware creations of Derek Medding's model shop, continues his tradition of including empowered and high-ranking (not to mention completely delicious) females within the principal cast. With the exception of the blatant sexism on display in *Identified*, as well as the treatment of a number of Paul Foster's girlfriends, women fare quite well in the war against the extraterrestrials. Colonel Virginia Lake (Wanda Ventham) not only is an accomplished scientist but can also hold her own against even the most dire of alien plots (*Timelash*).

Lieutenant Gay Ellis (Gabrielle Drake), the purple-haired head of Moonbase operations, along with Lieutenant Nina Barry (Dolores Mantez) control SHADO's first line of defense. They also appear throughout the series performing in various other capacities for SHADO, including Barry's appearance as a member of a Skydiver crew in *Sub-Smash*.

While characterization remains a strong element of *UFO*, far beyond any in previous Anderson productions, the contributions of the effects department are vital to *UFO*'s success. The rousing opening credits sequence, the collection of hardware from Skydiver, the Lunar Modules, SID, to the Mobiles and the (too cool for words) Interceptors, and the almost fetishistic love with which these creations are treated, are as much a part of the series as the characters themselves. It's no wonder that even today, model kits and replicas of the show's other "principal cast" are as sought after as when England's Dinky Toys manufactured the first missile-firing Interceptor toy. One can't help but feel an childlike glee as the words "Interceptors... Immediate launch!" are spoken and the pilots shoot into their craft which proceed to emerge from secret positions inside craters on the moon's surface.

In addition to Derek Meddings, another frequent Anderson collaborator making his presence felt in *UFO* was the late composer Barry Gray. *UFO* wouldn't have worked nearly as well without Gray's peerless work, from his infectious main title theme to his darkly melodic underscores. His Interceptor theme, evocative of his work on *Thunderbirds*, became a series signature and skewered versions of it were undoubtedly hummed by children the world over.

The design of the series endures even



"Unlike the currently vogue sentiment in the mantra 'Trust no one,' *UFO* seemed to say 'Trust us,' reassuring viewers that not only were the world's governments aware of the alien threat, but that they had banded together to do everything in their powers to prevent its success."

twenty-five years later, and arguably hasn't been surpassed by any genre program. The show sports the ultimate in pop-deco '60s futurism, from Sylvia Anderson's "Century 21" fashions, including Straker's outfits, Moonbase personnel's versatile jumpsuits cum miniskirts and Skydiver's exposed-mesh uniforms, to Straker's gull-winged car and psychedelic office wall mural. Heavily influenced by *2001*, the expansive sets and hardware illustrate a massive effort to create a viable and believable future while still maintaining a definitive "science fiction" feel.

Unfortunately, as the series progresses, little is learned about the Invaders themselves. While they are constantly shown to have intimate knowledge of SHADO's movements, frequently attacking or infiltrating even SHADO headquarters itself, their methods are never properly understood. In *The Cat with Ten Lives*, Dr. Doug Jackson (series regular Vladek Sheybal) advances radical new theories suggesting the aliens have no physical bodies, explaining their need for human beings as hosts. While compelling (and going a long way to explain their knowledge of SHADO activities), this is never explored further. The series conclusion, *The Long Sleep*, while offering another unique perspective on the aliens' use of human subjects, answers none of the pressing questions about the aliens and their true origins, political structure (they are shown to have dissidents in *A Question of Priorities*) or ultimate plans for earth. Perhaps if the show ran a second season, these question may have been addressed.

UFO remains a high-water mark in the history of genre television and most certainly could be considered Gerry Anderson's finest work. A thought-provoking and frequently difficult program, it shared a unique kinship to another ITC production, *The Prisoner*, as well as the first season of Anderson's follow-up series, the eerie and way-underrated (despite editor emeritus Chris Gore's humble opinion) *Space: 1999*. Completely foregoing the pervasive optimism of *Star Trek*, the whimsy of *Doctor Who* and lacking any of the pulp sensibilities of the stateside genre programs of Irwin Allen, the series a dark, nihilistic period in Britain when which hope seemed a luxury one simply couldn't afford. But isn't it ironic that during the time of its production in the late '60s, when anti-government fervor peaked, *UFO* cast a secret government organization in the role of protector of humanity while twenty-five years later, the genre's most popular program would cast those very same government operatives as the root of all evil?



CONVENTIONS

Just imagine a place, large enough to qualify for status as a community, where C-3PO and Darth Vader are not on opposite sides of the Force and a great storyteller holds sway over hundreds of adoring fans gathered around his feet. A place where dozens of beautiful women vie for the right to be the next fantasy calendar girl, an astronaut compares notes about space travel with a science fiction writer, artists paint with laser light, singers relate mythic tales, gamesters surmount overwhelming odds and the treasures of the universe are stocked to the ceiling awaiting purchase.

We're not talking virtual reality here, but a very real place that occupies the convention facilities at the Atlanta Hilton Towers and Civic Center once a year.

For each of the past nine years, a handful of talented and energetic fans has held one of the largest annual conventions in the country in Atlanta, bringing together fans, writers, artists, actors and creative people from all corners of the science fiction universe. Dragon*Con/ACE (Atlanta Comics Expo)

three hundred other guests from the Who's Who of science fiction joined thousands of fans from around the world for this year's convention.

Also in attendance were dozens of professional writers from the Science Fiction Writers of America (SFWA), the Horror Writers of America (HWA) and a local group known as the Dark River Writers. Professional artists were also plentiful from the worlds of science fiction and comics, in particular the Association of Science Fiction and Fantasy Artists and DC, Marvel and Dark Horse Comics.

But what is the appeal of Dragon*Con/ACE that draws thousands of science fiction fans and hundreds of genre professionals each year?

Leonard J. Provenzano, a professional photographer and talented filksinger from Hicksville, New York, sums up its appeal very clearly: "Dragon*Con differs from other cons because it's more oriented to providing something for everyone. If you are a *Star Trek* or *Star Wars* fan, there are plenty of panel discussions, readings and guests to satisfy your interests. If you read science fiction or comics, there are probably more writers or comic book illustrators here than

DRAGON SLAYERS

Dragon*Con/ACE's Annual Gathering Hosts the 1995 North American Science Fiction Convention

began back in 1987, with 1,400 fans in attendance. In 1994, the convention had nearly ten times as many attendees for all three days, and welcomed over 350 guests and program participants from all over the world.

This year, Dragon*Con/ACE was the host site for Starfleet (the international *Star Trek* fan club) and the 1995 North American Science Fiction Convention ("NASFiC"), the substitute gathering for those fans who are unable to attend an overseas Worldcon.

Committee members Ed Kramer, Bill Ritch and Paul Cashman anticipated the number of fans in attendance to top out at 15,000 total for its four-day run, nearly double the largest World Science Fiction Convention (L.A. Con II in 1984).

Authors Harlan Ellison, Timothy Zahn, George Alec Effinger, Kevin J. Anderson, Richard and Wendy Pini, actors Anthony (C-3PO) Daniels, David (Darth Vader) Prowse, Christopher (*Highlander*) Lambert, scream queens Monique Gabrielle and Brinke Stevens, artists Michael Whelan and Brian Froud and writer Chris Claremont, Astronaut Ed Gibson and

at any other con. If you like movies, or gaming, or filking, or meeting real-live people involved in the space program, it's all here."

Agreeing wholeheartedly with Provenzano, Carol Ross, an amateur costumer from Vero Beach, Florida, explained that she attends Dragon*Con yearly "because there are a lot of creative people in one place—people with open minds. You get to say what you think, and even if people don't agree with what you have to say, they listen."

She likened the convention's many tracks of programming to an open forum in which everyone's opinion has validity. From movies, panel discussions, readings and live theatre to costume contests, gaming and filking, Ross saw plenty of opportunity for fans to express their creativity—the very core of science fiction fandom.

The panel discussions at NASFiC ranged over a variety of subjects, from the truly ridiculous to the generally sublime. Whether fans wanted to know about the physics in Chuck Jones' cartoons, homoeroticism in vampire stories, space science in the 21st



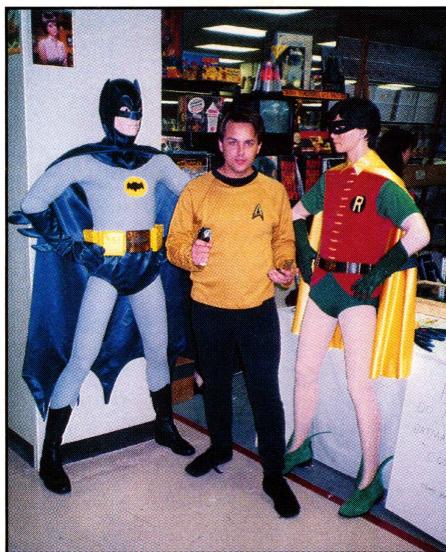
WHAT'S THE DEAL? In Dragon Con's dealers room, Del Rey hawks wares and Scream Queen Monique Gabrielle hawks herself.

Century, or the psychology of writing science fiction, the thirteen tracks of programming offered something different for everyone. The most popular panels tended to be the ones that took a provocative stance about a familiar subject, such as "Is Fox TV the Home of the Weird?", "Which Bad Movies Deserve *MST3K*?" and "Is *Babylon 5* Better Than *Star Trek*?" And opinions were widely mixed, stimulating heated but often very informed discussions about each topic.

"The Mythology Behind *Star Wars*," one of the more interesting and well-attended panel discussions, actually evolved over a two-day period, beginning on Friday afternoon and continuing Saturday morning. Moderated by Dyane Kirkland, the two one-hour sessions posed some very thoughtful questions about the nature of George Lucas' universe, and speculated about the future of the popular space saga. Kevin J. Anderson, author of the *Jedi Academy* trilogy, maintained that "market forces drive *Star Wars* more than mythological archetypes," while Josepha Sherman, Bob Lippman and myself argued whether Lucas had based his story on Joseph Campbell's classical journey of the hero as espoused in *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*. Nina Lee Braden, a doctoral candidate at the University of Tennessee, offered the most intriguing answer by assigning each of the lead characters in the series a Tarot card. After visualizing Leia and Chewbacca in the "Strength" card, Yoda as the "Hierophant," or the Death Star in the "Tower" card, fans in attendance had even more to think about after the two panels.

By the end of the weekend, it really wasn't important if the true hero behind the *Star Wars* trilogy was Luke or Darth Vader, if a Klingon could beat a Vorlon in a fist fight or if phasers were better than light sabers. What mattered most from the various discussions was that everyone—fans and panelists alike—could speak freely and be heard in a spirit of goodwill.

All the goodwill present at the convention served various charitable organizations as well. On Friday, Michael Davis, President of Motown Animation and Filmworks, hosted a two-hour auction to raise funds for the Atlanta Crisis Center (for battered women and children). Donated items included a signed, limited edition H.R. Giger print from *Species*, original artwork from Wendy Pini, dozens of books autographed by attending writers, and rock and movie memorabilia from the Hard Rock Cafe and Planet Hollywood. Masters of the Force (MOTF) raised several thousand dollars for The Children's Hospital by auctioning rare and hard-to-find *Star Wars* items at two auctions. Books, rare manuscripts and t-shirts donated by Mercedes Lackey (and others) were sold at



THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE UGLY: Atlanta's DragonCon attracts costumed fans from across the country, the globe and, apparently, several mental institutions.

the Queen's Own Charity Auction on Sunday with proceeds going to the "Rachel Vogt Fund," a fund set up for a fourteen year-old girl stricken with Hodgkin's Disease.

Dragon*Con/ACE also honored its own with an awards banquet on Friday evening. Limited to just 500 guests, the banquet featured a special taste of Atlanta with southern-fried chicken, black-eyed peas, corn bread and pecan pie.

But the real treat of the awards banquet was a special Harlan Ellison Tribute hosted by Peter David, the prolific author and comic book writer. In addition to the Ellison salute, Charles M. Brown and Master of Ceremonies Joe Haldeman gave out *Locus Magazine* Annual Readers' Awards in the categories of novel, short story, anthology and non-fiction. Among those nominated were C.J. Cherryh's *Foreigner*, Lois McMaster Bujold's *Mirror Dance*, Isaac Asimov's Memoir, Terry Bisson's *Dead Man's Curve* and Kate Wilhelm's *I Know What You're Thinking*.

Throughout the four-day weekend, fans were also encouraged to play-act in a variety of games and tournaments. Located in the Peachtree Plaza Hotel, a couple of blocks from the main hotel, gaming registration began early on Thursday morning. Games and tournaments were then started on the hour, and most ran no longer than four hours in length.

In addition to *Magic* and other tournament games, Dragon*Con also hosted a wide variety of "live" role-playing games. *Dark Confrontation*, a techno-horror role-playing game in which the playing field is the entire convention facilities, had roughly six hundred participants. From vampires, zombies, werewolves and ghosts to elves, trolls and the dreaded Men in Black, the players were encouraged to make alliances with fellow "creatures," influence enemies with magic, and "kill" those who stood in the way.

On Sunday, the four-day weekend concluded with remarks from Chris Claremont (the patriarch of *The X-Men*), signings by Tony (*Candyman*) Todd and Ben Bova, a discussion group offering "101 Ways to Kill Barney," a dead dragon party and a "Truth or Dare" contest, in which fans revealed their own personal experiences with cast members from *Star Trek*. At 5:00 pm, Ed Kramer officiated at the Closing Ceremonies, by bidding a fond farewell to NASFiC guests and staff and assuring everyone that Dragon*Con/ACE would return again next year with even more surprises.

Dragon*Con/ACE '96 will be held June 20-23, 1996, at the Atlanta Hilton and Towers, Westin Peachtree Plaza Hotel and the Atlanta Civic Center. Information about future conventions can be obtained from Dragon*Con/ACE, P.O. Box 47696, Atlanta, GA 30362-0696.



Growing up in what he calls "the Berkeley of Minneapolis," author Jim Young says it was only natural that he would come across rock 'n' roll, science fiction and motorcycles. The unlikely diplomat's experiences in Dinkytown, where his parents owned a small restaurant frequented by Allen Ginsberg and other counterculture figures of the '50s and '60s, have continued to shape him in strange ways. Just take a look at his second and latest novel, *Armed Memory* (Tor Books), largely written in Moscow.

"Those have been three foci in my life, all of them interrelated," Young says. "You can't help but see in this book that they all go together and produce something very different from what I think is sort of the run-of-the-mill approach of people who

determined to return all life to the sea by dismantling industrial civilization.

As Young speaks about his past, particularly his childhood, he eventually reveals many of *Armed Memory*'s central elements. The ethnic mix of the Minneapolis-St. Paul area gave him a strong awareness of immigrants and difference in an area that was not without its clashes.

"That odd confluence of the New England Yankee, the German—especially the North German—the Scandinavian, the Asians and a scattering of Czechs produces a very different kind of humor that will get you in trouble more rapidly in my experience than anything else about Minnesota," Young says.

Being part Native American, Young dealt with the area's bigotry as he was exposed to non-

LIKE THE CORNERS OF MY MIND

In *ARMED MEMORY*, author Jim Young takes the science fiction novel into the next century

write science fiction or, for that matter, fiction period. But it makes sense to me."

In *Armed Memory*, the technological advances of the 21st century allow people to radically change their appearance through a viral process called microding. When twentysomething Tim Wandel goes to New York City to stay with friends and maybe look for work, he unexpectedly runs into his cousin Johnny Stevens (actually a replicant of Johnny), who has turned genetic engineering into a massive industry that takes the tenets of fashion, plastic surgery and the Modern Primitives movement to the limit.

Johnny runs Microde City, the leading microding group, and is comfortable believing his process has virtually ended racism by allowing people to be whatever they want to be—celebrity icon, creature, muscleman, whatever. For Johnny, a huge Doors fan, it has to be the Lizard King, Jim Morrison's version of the world serpent—a symbol of power, eternity and transformation.

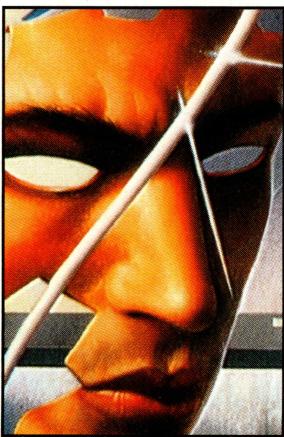
Despite all the good microding has done, Johnny and the rest of the world must now deal with its downside, a shadowy criminal group known as the hammerheads because of their resemblance to hammerhead sharks. A conglomeration of Asian gangs and other international bad guys with a Buddhist bent, the hammerheads are

Western ideas (like respecting the earth) through his grandmother and his progressive parents, ideas he takes to disturbing extremes in *Armed Memory*.

Young describes his earliest writing as "travel writing of a made-up variety." He didn't become ambitious until high school, when he and his friends created Minneapolis Fandom, the only Minneapolis-St. Paul-based fan group for many years. Genre author Clifford Simak, whom Young regards as one of the top 100 American 20th-century writers, helped the group run a series of informal writing workshops in the late '60s and early '70s.

Around the same time the group was taking off, Young decided he couldn't be a paleontologist—his original ambition—after a high school chemistry course proved maddeningly free-form, a bad experience that snuffed his interest in a serious science career. Still, he completed part of a math degree and part of an associate arts degree in geology in college.

Young began selling his writing to regional magazines in the early '70s, but he was a singer-songwriter, graduate student and "holder of a variety of odd jobs" before his first novel, *The Face of the Deep*, was published in paperback in 1979. An account of a first contact between our civilization and one in space, the novel was "sort of a tribute to the juvenile books of Robert Heinlein,



though it wasn't sold that way," Young says.

Finally, desperate for money that his writing and music weren't providing, he completed his doctorate in philosophy in 1980 and fell back on the interest in government that a diplomatic history course had piqued in him years earlier.

He took the civil service test and the foreign service test, and the State Department offered him a job in 1981.

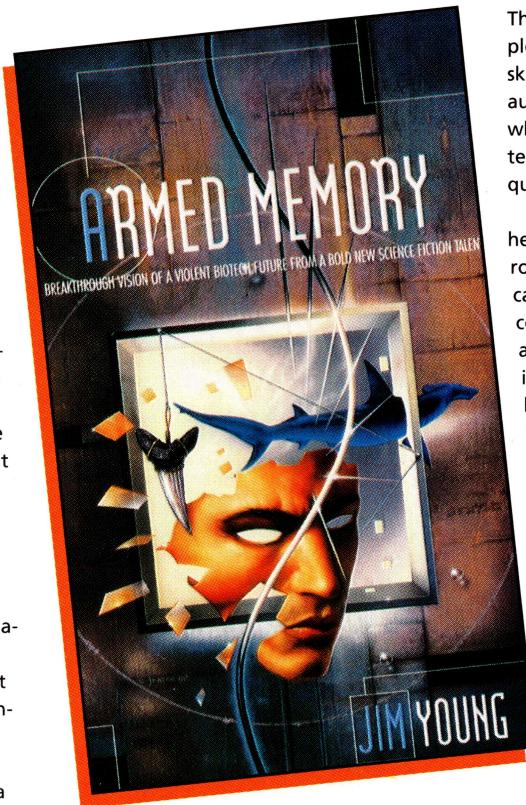
"Next thing I knew, I was registering babies in Frankfurt, West Germany," he says. Though he considered leaving the foreign service after the first year, he went on to a post at the U.S. Embassy in Botswana, South Africa. Later, back in Washington, he was the last person in the State Department to deal with East Germany. "When I close out an account, I really close out an account," he jokes.

His recently acquired Russian came in handy for about three years in Moscow, where he handled chemical weapons negotiations during the day and wrote much of *Armed Memory* at night. Then he lucked out and landed his current position, what he considers one of the really great foreign service positions in London. "I'm the person who deals with the British Labor Party on about a half-time basis, and I'm the Africa watcher the rest of the time...because there's a great deal that happens regarding Africa in London."

Government service hasn't kept Young from following the sciences closely. He says the technology in *Armed Memory* actually isn't that far-fetched. Though experiments using viruses to correct genes have gone on since 1991 and have met with some success, Young says the real breakthroughs will come when the human genome-mapping project underway in Bethesda, Maryland is complete. He guesses that's probably ten years away.

Assuming extreme modification would eventually be possible, Young next had to decide on a word for it. "I figured people would probably come up with a nice, compact term like 'micro-encoding,' but then obviously would come up with a more slang term for it. Hence 'microding,' which is then immediately grabbed onto by marketing as a term of art such as 'shirting,'" which is the sale of shirts. "When I worked in the fashion industry, I was really aghast at some of the highfalutin terms that are bantered about there," Young says. "Microding is sort of a comment on that."

The various grad students and genetic engineering scholars Young talked to about microding would inevitably ask, "Well, where is the money going to come from to pay for this research?" And my answer would be cosmetics. The cosmetics industry is vitally interested in what's going on in bioengineering.



"The cosmetics industry is vitally interested in what's going on in bioengineering. They're really interested in getting rid of people's wrinkles, they're obviously interested in skin coloration. The person who perfects microding to correct male pattern baldness will become very wealthy, very quickly."

They're really interested in getting rid of people's wrinkles, they're obviously interested in skin coloration." And the admittedly thinning author makes this prediction: "The person who perfects microding to correct male pattern baldness will become very wealthy, very quickly."

By contrast, coming up with the hammerheads as "the most radical of all possible environmentalists" didn't involve any research. It came to Young in a vision before he'd even come up with microding. "It was a dream, and it was so frightening that I awoke with it," he says. "What an amazing image: a human form topped off by the head of a hammerhead shark."

On the page, Young is spare and clear. Though its structure provides multiple perspectives, *Armed Memory* moves quickly, and is remarkably free of descriptive clutter. In person, sipping a latte outside a North Hollywood coffeehouse, Young's all over the place, but in an educational way. With the novel finished, Young is primed to pull meaning out the other end, aided, perhaps, by a little caffeine.

"Clearly one of the constraints of humanity is that you can't ever know it all...One of the allusions I'm making that I'm kind of expecting will come up is that this is a criticism of *The Great Gatsby*, a very loving criticism," he says. "Johnny Stevens is a Gatsby-esque figure, but he's a real visionary, whereas Gatsby turned out really to be a phony."

He admits he draws inspiration for his prose from Hemingway. And the book's framing device—testimony and reconstructions of events presented to a Senate Intelligence Committee—is an effective outgrowth of Young's government service. But you don't have to go along with his assertion that the novel's structure is "kind of a model, although not a very taut model, of DNA" to appreciate it. Story strands spiral around each other, and there is "fissioning" and reformation in a loose sense, but *Armed Memory*'s enough to simply say that it's a well-crafted, entertaining read.

Not long after decrying the influence of marketing on contemporary sci-fi literature and citing his book as a "protest," Young says, "Everything that I'm writing is intended to be a film. That's my goal."

Prospective producers interested in doing a Jim Young project might want to go with *Armed Memory*, as his next book could be hard to bring believably to the screen. Currently titled *Cockatrice*, it concerns religion, politics and artificial intelligence firms, with P.T. Barnum and Thomas Edison battling it out for market-dominance. And rest assured, Young hasn't forgotten his love of rock: "Hendrix is in the new one."



COMMUNIQUES

reader communiqés

Despite the large volume of mail, personal replies are absolutely possible. Mail can be forwarded. Please make such requests. They can be fulfilled (just enclose an SASE). Other fans and advertisers sometimes contact readers whose letters are printed here. If you're antisocial and don't like mail cluttering up your mailbox, mark your letter "Please Withhold My Address, Sci-Fi Uni." Otherwise, we retain the option to print it. So there.

Finally, if you're over eight years old, please type your letters!

POLISH TREK

Dear SCI-FI UNIVERSE,
I happen to live in a country where science fiction is generally neglected as a genre. Therefore, as a hard-core sci-fi maniac, I find it rather difficult to obtain the means to expand my interest's horizons. Nevertheless, I tend to overcome all the obstacles and acquire various items like comic books and videocassettes courtesy of my friends from all over the world.

I also go to great lengths in order to get my hands on SCI-FI UNIVERSE which seems to be one of the most exhaustive magazines covering the genre. I really enjoy reading each and every issue, particularly looking for some new information about Star Trek. Hence my letter. Having read some of the negative opinions concerning Star Trek: Deep Space Nine that have been appearing on the Communiques pages, I decided to add a few words of mine.

In order to explain my tremendous attraction to Deep Space Nine, I would have to give you a short presentation of the history of my country. You see, when the Second World War began, Poland was viciously attacked by Hitler's and Stalin's armies. During the occupation, the Germans managed to rob us of our cultural legacy, burn most of our cities to the ground and send hundreds of thousands of people to die in the concentration camps. However, we never gave up and fought for freedom, supported by our faith, determination and courage. After five long years, the Allies came and helped us to end those atrocities and liberate our country.

Nowadays, Polish people are witnessing the birth of extremely dangerous nationalist movements and the struggle for power between various parties in which the Church gains more and more influence over our nation's matters. At the same time, the western countries assist us in achieving lasting democracy. Does it all sound familiar to you? It certainly does to me.

When watching episodes like Duet, In the Hands of the Prophets or my favorite Bajoran three-parter (The Homecoming, The Circle, and The Siege), I could not shake the feeling that I was participating in my high school history classes time and time again. The similarities between the series' premise and the reality I live in are quite striking. If you add to it absolutely wonderful storytelling, plausibly developed characters and even special effects, you will understand why Star Trek: Deep Space Nine is the series far more richer and sophisticated than the other three.

Therefore, I often wonder why some of the Star Trek fans are so desperate to criticize Deep Space Nine instead of giving it a chance to prove itself. In my humble opinion, Deep Space Nine certainly deserves much more attention than it receives. It is a shame people cannot see it. I suspect that American sci-fi fans are really spoiled by the number of movies and shows that they are provided with, courtesy of the American entertainment industry. Polish sci-fi fans do not have the luxury of choosing the series that they would like to see since there are almost none on Polish TV.

So, I would strongly suggest that Star Trek fans who seem to complain about what they have should start to appreciate how lucky and blessed they are comparing to those who live in the backwaters of the world.

Arkadiusz Wroblewski
ul. Wałecznych 88 m.7
70-774 Szczecin Poland

VIVISECTING VOYAGER

Dear SCI-FI UNIVERSE,
I have recently been watching some of my favorite ST: TNG episodes, saying to myself, "Hey, why are these so good and Voyager is so bad?" It's really quite simple. Although ST:TNG is not innocent of using clichés, they don't do so every single episode like Voyager does. When people talk about the great episodes of ST:TNG and the reasons that they watch the show, do you hear about failed holodecks and alternate universes? No. All that Voyager does is take bad Star Trek clichés and mix it with other stories (e.g. Beowulf) and slap different names on it. What has Voyager done that ST:TNG hasn't already done ten times better?

Chris Christopher
East Brunswick, NJ

Dear SCI-FI UNIVERSE:
I am writing to express my displeasure over this season's episodes of Voyager. The writers are afraid to take any chances, and are killing the show! The end result of every single episode this season has been: NOTHING! For example, when Kes had developed her mental powers, at the end of the episode, they

were gone. End result? NOTHING. Why couldn't they have left Kes with at least some of her mental powers?

This is a trend that has been going on all season. At the end of the episode, when you sit back and think about it, you realize that if you had missed that episode, you wouldn't have missed anything. Future episodes will not refer to it and nothing will have happened that had even the tiniest of effects on the series.

What a pathetic showing for a series that started off so well. The series premiere for the show was nothing short of stunning. In only 15 minutes, the writers had you hating some characters, while loving others. Then they killed the character that you hated! It was beautiful!

The show that started out a winner has tripped somewhere along the way. Let's hope the horse didn't break its leg and has only stumbled. What this series needs are stories that matter and have an impact on the series. We need individual stories that make us feel like we've watched a story and we need a larger overall story that runs throughout the season. I personally love Babylon 5 and would love to see that kind of writing on Voyager.

William Stewart
Huntington, NY

AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT...

Dear SCI-FI UNIVERSE,
I haven't written a fan letter before, but I saw a TV series I really like and wondered if you have any information on how to write the network or show.

The show is new this season and it's called Space: Above and Beyond. I like the way it depicts the characters as people just trying to figure things out and not as experienced people with all the answers. It seems a more realistic way to go in presenting a space drama. It has a little less fantasy. For instance, there are no transports or food replicators, etc. I did like Star Trek, but I like the fresh perspective more.

I also like the characters. My favorite is Colonel McQueen. There has to be someone in the leadership role and he works well. I like the way his character is portrayed by the actor James Morrison because it would probably be easy to get lost with all the action of the young cast. But he holds his own and is just as interesting. The whole cast is good and it's nice to turn on the TV and not see the same old faces from other shows or characters spun off from other series.

Tori Gil
Santee, CA

Dear Tori,
To write to your favorite Space actors or the writers and producers, send your let-

ter to them c/o Twentieth Century Fox, 10201 West Pico Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90064-2651.

WONDERING ABOUT WANDERER

Dear SCI-FI UNIVERSE,
I just read the preview article on The Wanderer in your November issue. It sounded moderately interesting, and, being an avid fan of science fiction/fantasy in almost any form, I was all set to give it a try—until, in the last paragraph, I came to Steve Lanning's totally gratuitous swipe at Highlander: The Series. So he wouldn't want his name to be in the credits of that show? Well, I guess that makes two of us. And, while I may be speaking from ignorance, I wasn't aware that there was any great groundswell of demand from any other quarter for that event to occur.

I can only conclude that Mr. Lanning knows from whence his series' main competition will be coming (not surprising, considering the rip-off factor in the basic premise of The Wanderer—the forces of good and evil, as personified by a pair of "immortal" brothers, fighting down the centuries—sound familiar?) and wanted to get in a dig before the battle was joined. Too bad. I'm almost always willing to check out a new show of this sort. But if, as Mr. Lanning seems to imply, there can be only one, then for me it will always, and inevitably, be Duncan MacLeod, the Highlander.

Rebecca Becker
West Bloomfield, MI

JUST THE FACTS, MAX

Dear SCI-FI UNIVERSE,
I've noticed that SCI-FI UNIVERSE is a lot different than Starlog in one respect: you ain't just a cheerleader for whatever is popular at the moment. If something that is being hyped by others is awful, you say so. How refreshing! I want to use this letter to go the other way: I want to praise a series that was never a hit, but should have been. This program is currently being rerun on the Sci-Fi Channel. The series I'm referring to is the 1987 ABC-series Max Headroom. It is my all-time favorite SF series.

I never understood why Star Trek fans would always say that their favorite program had affected them deeply and had changed them. I couldn't fathom why they spent so much time obsessing over a TV-series. I thought TV was mindless and that you should never expect much from it. Then, I saw Max Headroom.

I was blown away by how different it was from anything else on TV. But it also was the first series that seemed like it was for my generation. I'm in my early 30s. I'm too young to have been a hippie in the '60s. Growing up, popular culture seemed so dominated by people older than myself. It had their attitudes and their



culture. *Star Trek* really was for the '60s generation. It had their idealism, their hope for the future. When *Max Headroom* came along, I saw my generation's cynical, sarcastic attitude portrayed for the first time on a TV series. I saw our feeling—that maybe the future really wouldn't be so great—being depicted on television.

To me, *Max Headroom* is more relevant now than it was when it originally aired. It showed a society where the line between news and entertainment had become blurred. When the O.J. Simpson trial became the most important thing on TV, more important than Bosnia or the economy, I knew my favorite program had been right on-target.

And in attacking the people in power as a bunch of greedy, self-righteous fools, it was also totally correct. This series attacked politicians long before the anti-politician fervor of today! It presented corporate leaders as greedy people willing to do any horrible thing for a buck. That could really resonate with workers resentful of how their paychecks are remaining stagnant while these corporations are earning record profits.

Max Headroom was also the very first cyberpunk TV program. All the series that have tried to follow in its footsteps since have only been pale imitations. They only looked cyberpunk. Otherwise, they were just as predictable and mainstream as other series.

Now that *Max Headroom* has switched from Bravo over to the Sci-Fi Channel, I hope that SF fans who didn't see it the first time will finally check it out. Maybe it still has a chance to be the phenomenon it deserves to be. And maybe Peter Wagg, the producer of *Max Headroom*, will finally be respected like Gene Roddenberry. Sure, Wagg did come up with a darker vision of the future than Roddenberry did, but he cared just as much about expanding the boundaries of TV. He felt, as Roddenberry did, that TV viewers weren't mindless morons. I admire Wagg and I hope that soon other SF fans will as well.

In conclusion, I am asking SF fans to check out *Max Headroom*. Let's make a series popular that deserves to be popular!

Tammy Smith
9648 Marilla #94
Lakeside, CA 92040

HOKEY HISTORY

Dear Sci-Fi UNIVERSE,
A lot has been written about the revival of science fiction on television but I think that TV has just recovered from the domination and damage done by the two giant hacks of television, namely Irwin Allen and Glen Larson.

In the '50s and '60s we had good science fiction shows like *The Twilight Zone*, *The Outer Limits* and *Star Trek* before Irwin Allen, a man with no idea of story or character, took control and ruined it.

For example, Irwin turned *Lost in Space* from its first season as a fun adventure show into a ridiculous, absurd piece of rubbish that even frustrated its actors.

Irwin Allen's other shows featured more fights than story and the same could be said of Glen Larson. Glen Larson was known for copying movies (*Butch Cassidy* became *Alias Smith and Jones*, for example). But his *Battlestar Galactica* (a *Star Wars* imitation) could have been a good show in the hands of a more competent producer, as Glen was an atrocious script writer and producer. The same goes for the dreadful *Buck Rogers* series with its inept scripts and production.

Under the control of these two men science fiction from the '60s to the early '80s and earned a reputation of no story or characterization and it is only now that

they are starting to get some respect.

Local Australians had a good laugh when Mr. Glen Larson recruited Australian dork and definite non-actor Mark "Jocko" Jackson for a show some years back on the basis of a battery advertisement? That just shows Mr. Larson's incompetence as a producer. I forget the show's name but it was voted by Americans to be the worst show on TV. [*The Highwayman* — Ed.].

M. Jensen
Attadale, West Australia

Dear M,
Your first name
isn't Maren, is it?
That would
explain a great
many things.

OH, BACK TO THAT AGAIN...

Dear Sci-Fi UNIVERSE,
First of all, let me tell you how refreshing your magazine is when compared with all the other sci-fi publications out there. Imagine—a magazine devoted to science fiction that doesn't continually ram *Star Trek* down your throat! And one better—to actually criticize *Trek*! Unbelievable! I purchased your first issue because of the Millennium Falcon on the cover, and as soon as I read the editor's

introduction concerning the reaction he had when the Star Destroyer roared across the screen, I knew I had stumbled upon a gem. But you people undoubtedly know how good your work is, so I won't go on about it.

Secondly, how long before you give *Star Trek: Voyager* the withering criticism it so richly deserves? I realize first-season shows are generally miserable because writers believe character development is somehow more important than plot, but come on. This is the fourth series in a sci-fi package that has spanned over 20 years. I would think that all the problems associated with the earlier shows would serve as sort of guideline for the new one, but unfortunately it seems like these people just don't want to learn.

I gave the show a chance, really; but the premise itself was old—and it got worse from there. They can't get back in the pilot because they're afraid of the Kazons' getting the technology off that station so they have to blast it manually? Excuse me, this is what century? How about whipping up some time bombs or something to blow the hell out of the place just after they use the transport beam?

But I'll give them that. After all, there wouldn't be a show if they got back in the pilot episode. This being *Trek* and all, you have to have the obligatory show (or shows) about the unnatural phenomena where you meet your own ship or there's some kind of parasite that's going to munch on your ship's neural network or something. Am I the only one, however, who doesn't find any kind of tension in a situation where the ship's about to be

knocked off and somebody on the bridge starts yelling something about subspace fields or neutrino fields and suddenly the problem gets fixed?

I lasted until the Vidiens showed up and stole Neelix's lungs. I still shudder when I think of that one. I remember sitting back at a commercial break and thinking, they just stole this guy's lungs and I'm supposed to take this seriously? And then Captain Janeway doesn't have the will to force the Vidiens into giving them back once she finds the guy who

cared for these people, regardless of how they looked. The aliens actually were three-dimensional and I felt for them and their causes. You could see Londo's guilt as the Narn homeworld was attacked. You could feel G'Kar's anguish when he asked Sheridan for asylum. There is a growing sense of dread as the Great War nears—and they've got me hooked.

Now you go back and watch *Trek*, and it's like, so what? You know that the main characters are never really going to change. Even when Picard was taken by the Borg (surely a traumatic event), aside from the episode following and a few mentions of it, there were never any serious repercussions. When he was captured and tortured by the Cardassians, all was apparently forgotten once the episode was over. When Geordi was "reprogrammed" by the Romulans nothing ever came of it, even after the poignant ending. But when G'Kar's people lost the war, he wasn't just the same happy guy the following week.

Star Trek has been getting more and more one-dimensional and it seems like the fans are content to let it go that way. The recent *DS9* episode where the Klingon/Federation peace treaty was broken was great and the best *DS9* episode I've ever seen. But in the next one there isn't even a mention of it! There has to be some continuity, at least. Otherwise, it insults your intelligence.

I'm not a rabid fan; I can't recite the episodes by name and season number. I had to look up the name of the alien race that took Neelix's lungs (and I had to check the spelling of his name, too). I don't have the time or the energy to debate whether there would be enough of a seal in the 1937 Ford's gas tank to keep enough fuel in there to start the sucker up after 400 years. What I am a fan of is good storytelling, regardless of the genre. And I think *Babylon 5* is telling a hell of a story.

Rob Casalett
Sylvania, OH

AND FINALLY...

Dear Sci-Fi UNIVERSE,
Please convey this angry letter to the countless "jump on the bandwagon" cynics out there who criticize *Star Trek* in its various shapes and forms day in and day out. Shut the hell up! These are the descendants of the original cynics who caused the demise of the original *Trek*. If you can't hack *Star Trek* anymore, go watch *Babylon 5*, *X-Files* or some other cynic-pleasing shit!

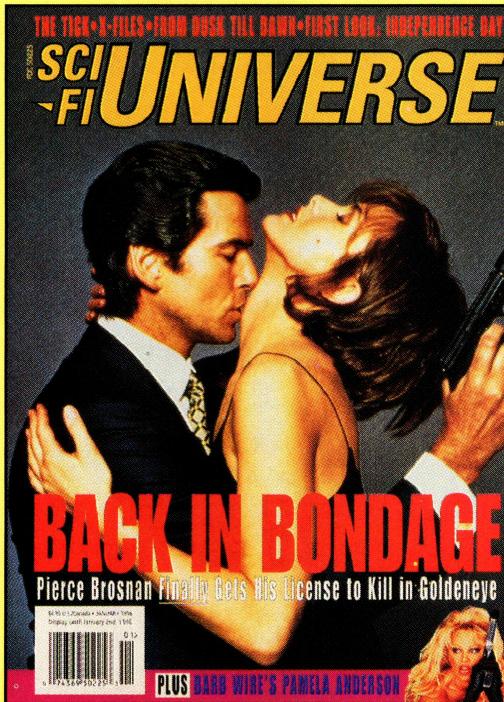
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Hollywood, CA

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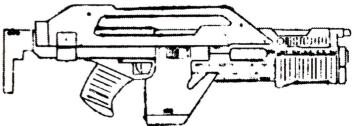
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Universal Armorer

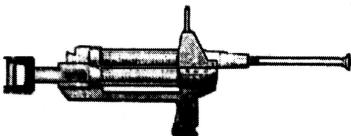
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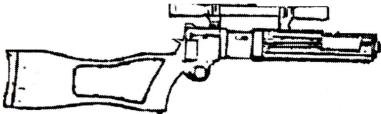
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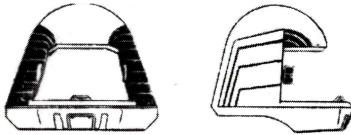
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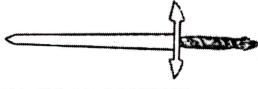
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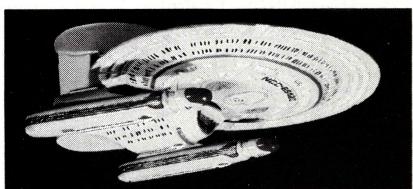
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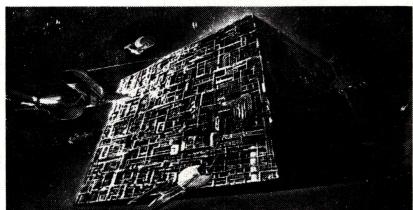
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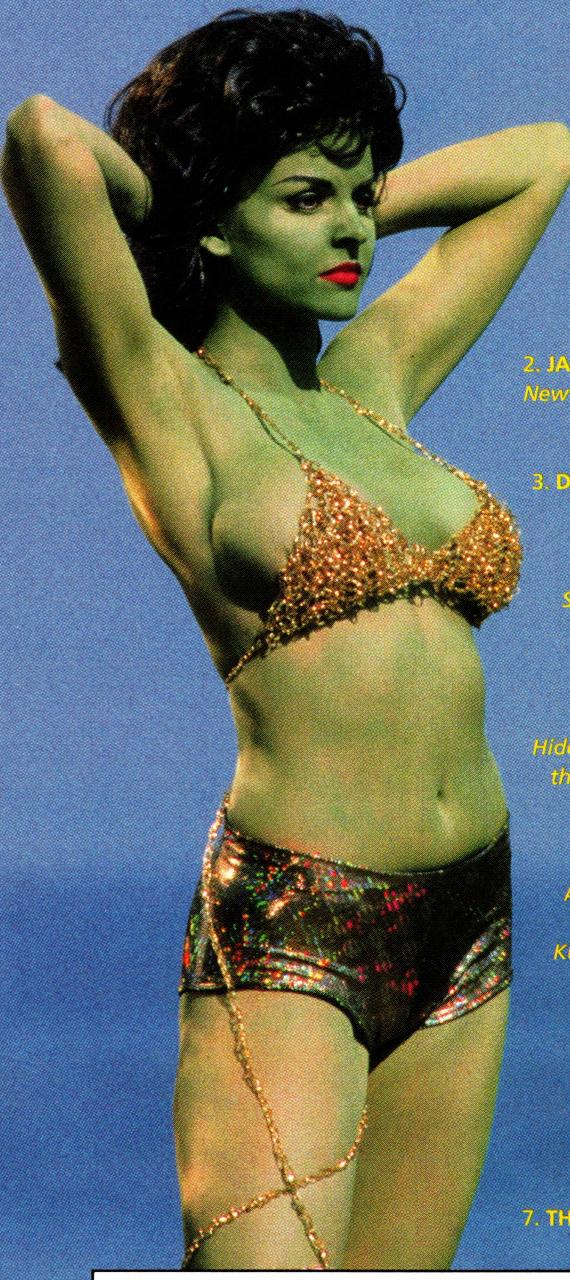
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Okay, so it's not the most original concept in the world, but so what? With this issue, Sci-Fi UNIVERSE proudly institutes a new feature in which our readers can send in their Desert Planet Discs (that's either laser, DVD or, god forbid, VHS). These are your favorite genre movies that you would want to be stranded on a desert planet with after your shuttlecraft crashes. To kick off our inaugural column, here's what SFU Critic-at-Large Robert Meyer Burnett was thinking...

desert planet discs



ROBERT MEYER BURNETT (Critic-at-Large)

1. A CLOCKWORK ORANGE (Warner Home Video)

Still my favorite film from my favorite director. No frills, but a tight transfer. The film, as always, speaks for itself. Viddy well.

2. JAWS (Special Edition, MCA Home Video)

New transfer. New interviews. Same perfect movie. No boating accidents here.

3. DAWN OF THE DEAD (Perfect Collection, Emotion Home Video, IMPORT)

Romero's cut and Argento's cut in one huge, chrome box. Gore galore. Supplementary book even has shopping mall schematics...

4. THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK (CLV THX Transfer, Fox Video)

Hideous new jacket art, but still the best of the Star Wars series and very possibly the finest fantasy film ever made.

5. 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY (25th Anniversary Edition, MGM Home Video)

Another from Stan (my main man) Kubrick. The effects are still unsurpassed. Makes one ache for A.I..

6. WINGS OF DESIRE (Image Entertainment)

Wim Wenders' masterstroke of angelic fantasy may be the intellectual's E.T.. A true celebration of humanity.

7. THE EXORCIST (Warner Home Video)

Great with Wings of Desire. Still the most subversive horror film ever made. Every twelve-year-old girl should have a crucifix (next to Rosemary's Baby, genius - ED).

8. WAR OF THE WORLDS (Paramount Home Video)

The movie that made me want to make movies. Recent transfer looks like someone painted every frame.

9. (TIE) ALIENS/THE ABYSS/TERMINATOR II (Fox Laser Deluxe Editions)

Jivin' Jim Cameron's blue-light trilogy, firmly cementing his reputation as the greatest genre filmmaker of the last decade. If only his writing ability equalled his visual skill, then we'd really have something. The exhaustive supplementary material on these discs will save everyone their film school tuition.

10. STAR TREK: GENERATIONS (Paramount Home Video)

Because I'd need one totally useless disc to use as a reflector to signal passing ships to teleport me off this rock. Made me understand the phrase "losing my religion." Cinematic history's best example of why some work in television and others work in the movies. But oh my, what a beautiful transfer.

Send your ten Desert Planet Discs with your best beach photo to Desert Planet Discs, c/o Sci-Fi UNIVERSE, 8484 Wilshire Boulevard #900, Beverly Hills, CA 90211.

NEXT UNIVERSE: This is the one you've been waiting for! Pamela Anderson Lee gives us the naked truth about the making of *Barb Wire*. Plus: the *Star Trek* 30th anniversary celebration begins, *Independence Day* explodes, Tim Burton chomps on *James & the Giant Peach* and more *B5!* Get a piece of the action at your local newsstand, bookstore or comic book specialty retailer on March 26, 1996.

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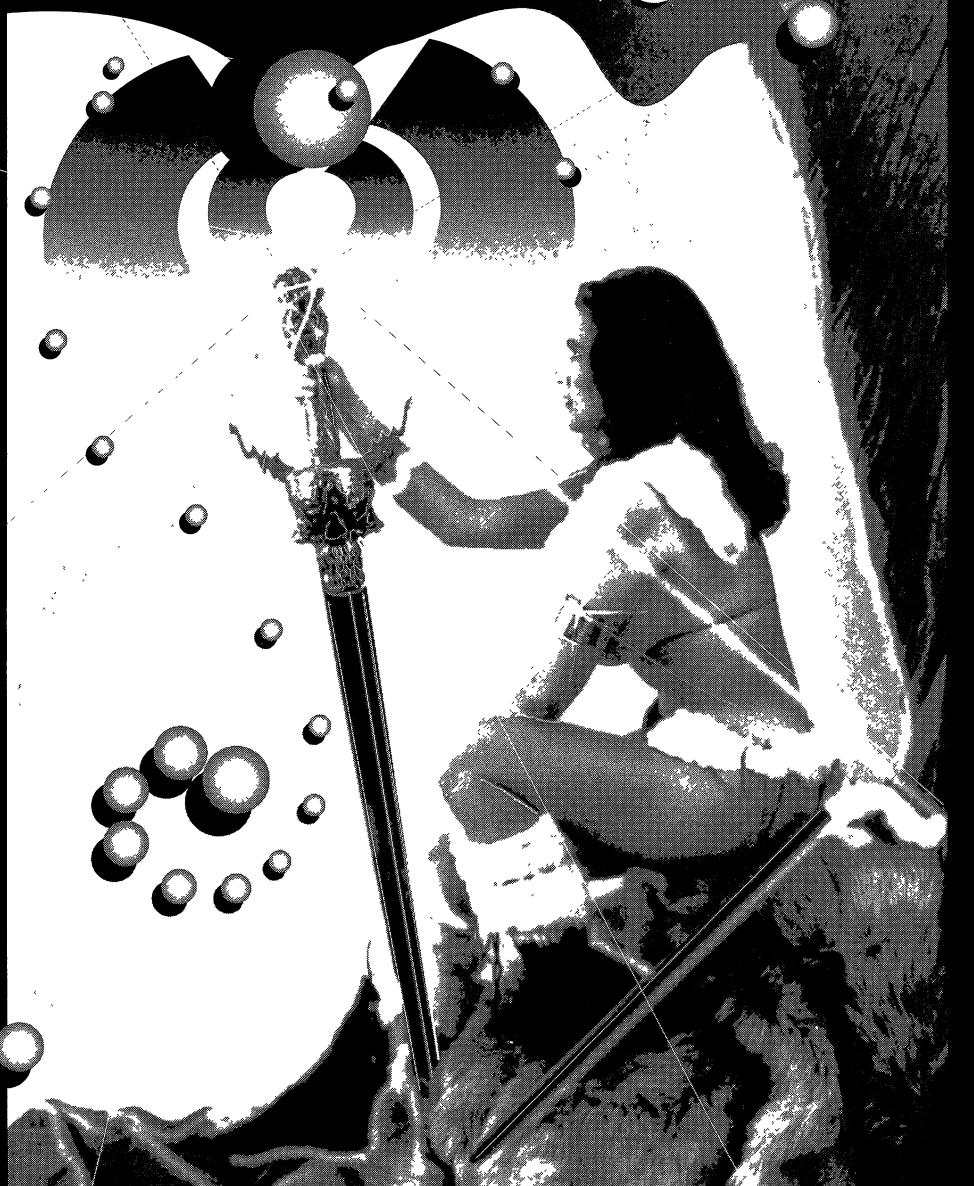
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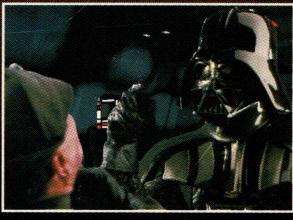
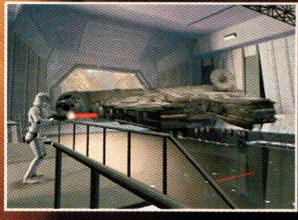
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